

Sri Pāda: Diversity and Exclusion in a Sacred Site in Sri Lanka

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I declare that this thesis is, in its entirety, my original work.

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For my mother, Siriyawati De Silva and my wife, Chaithrika

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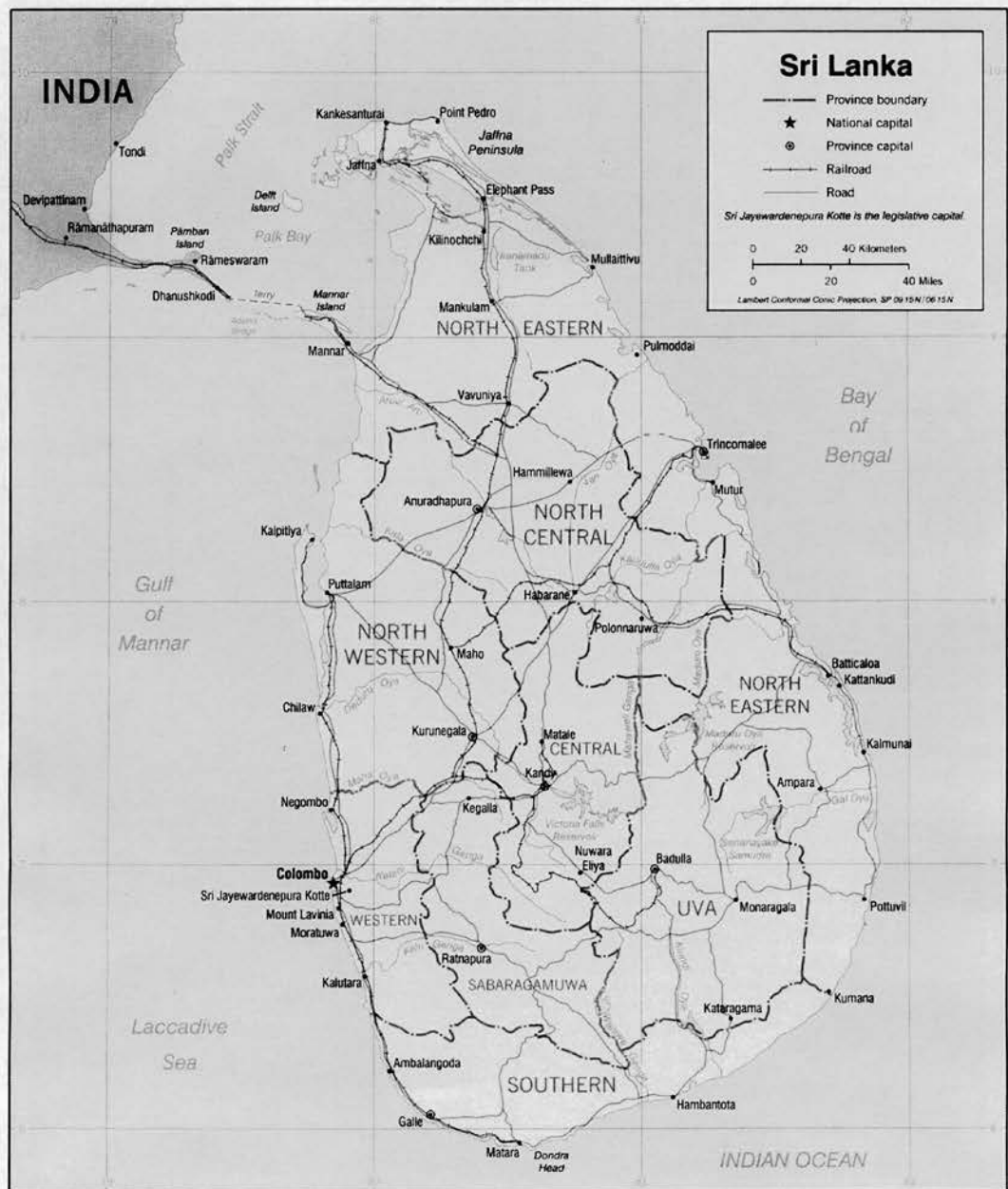
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ABSTRACT

The thesis is an ethnohistorical study of one major pilgrimage site in Sri Lanka, known as Sri Pāda (Adam's Peak), where hundreds of thousands of pilgrims annually visit to worship the sacred footprint which is located in the mountain top temple. This sacred footprint has different sacred connotations for Sri Lanka's major religious groups (Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Catholic). However, this pilgrimage site, which was considered a multi-religious site until the turn of the twentieth century, has now been constructed or ordered into an ethnic majoritarian Buddhist space. My thesis, therefore, concentrates in part on the historical process which has led to the construction of the pilgrimage site as a Buddhist space, and then locates this process within the wider context of the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka. My work highlights the powerful role pilgrimage can play in particular religious discourses and the manner it legitimates certain ways of envisaging power and relationships of domination at particular conjunctures, which is clearly apparent in the contemporary Sinhala Buddhist cultural nationalism in Sri Lanka.

This thesis is divided into two interconnected parts. The first part explores the major competing discourses that have been arisen during its political and religious history and the second part is mainly focussed on the style of religiosity and the social composition of pilgrims, and explores social factors in the practices of worship. One chapter deals with the style of "official" Buddhist religiosity found at this centre and two further chapters look at devotional and expressive forms of religiosity of pilgrims, which is oriented to the Buddha rather than the gods and as such is markedly different from that documented by anthropologists working in other parts of the island. The final chapter investigates links between devotional styles and the shifting socio-political contexts. The documentation of the prevailing styles of religiosity at Sri Pāda enable me to show on one hand how such religiosity further undermines the broadly Weberian antinomies that have dominated the anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, and on other hand the intensity or scale of Buddhicization of the historically viewed 'sacred site'.



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Figure 1-Map of Sri Lanka

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Abbreviation

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Abbreviation

AGA	Assistant Government Agent
BTC	Buddhist Temporalities Committees
DBTC	District Buddhist Temporalities Committees
GA	Government Agent
KGC	Kampane Gunaratana Collection
MP	Mandarampura Puvata
Mv.	Mahavamsa
VDC	Vehalle Dhammapala Collection
SBS	Sabaragamu Bhikku Sanvidanaya
SLBC	Sri Lanka Broad casting Corporation
SLNA	Sri Lanka National Archive

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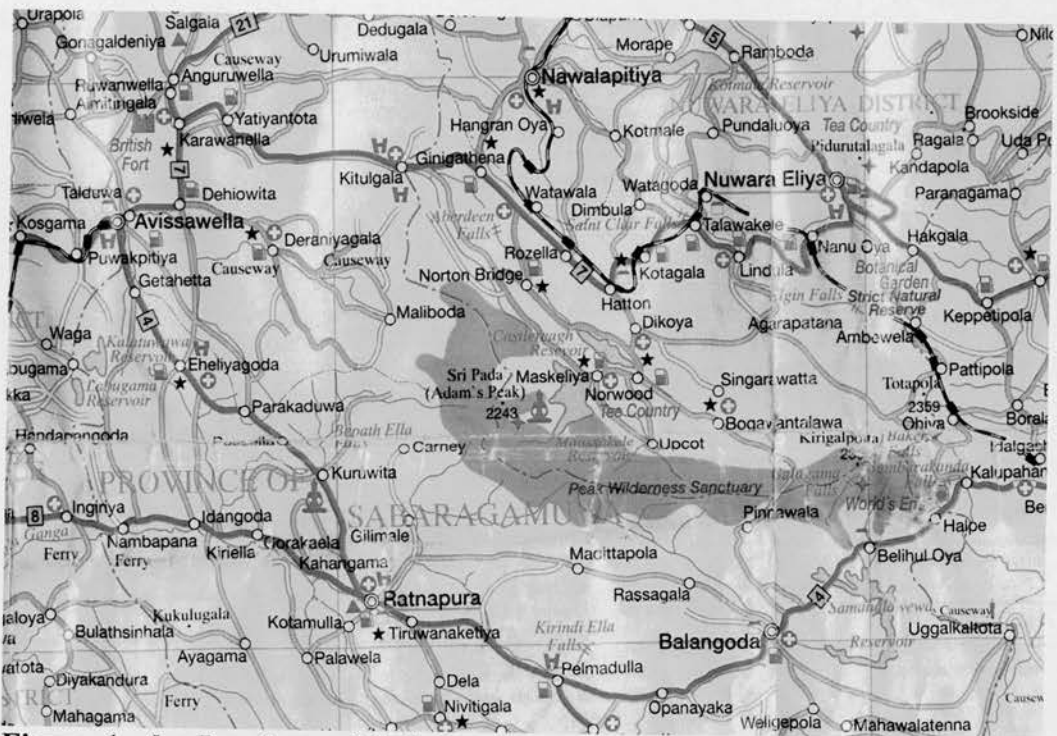
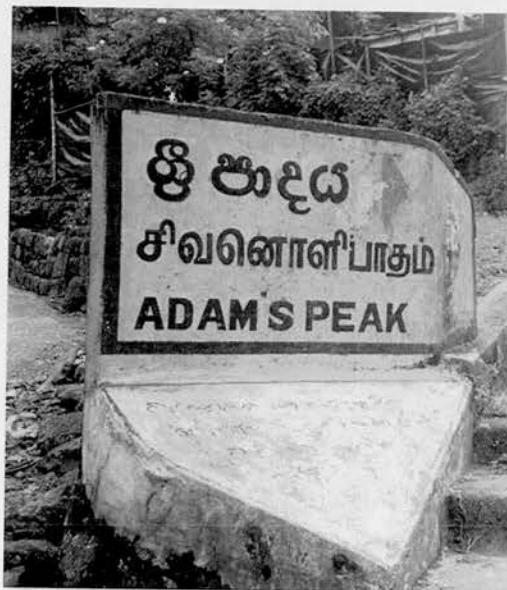


Figure 1. the Province of Sabaragamuwa and the part of Nuwara Eliya District



Picture 1. the direction to Sri Pāda

Introduction

This thesis is an anthropological and historical study of a major pilgrimage site in Sri Lanka, popularly known as ‘Sri Pāda’¹ or the temple of the sacred footprint. It is also known to the English-speaking world by its Anglicized name “Adam’s Peak”. This name is still used as a sign of the long colonial presence in the island. Historically speaking, Sri Pāda is a remarkable place of worship for people belonging to all four major religions in Sri Lanka where they share one particular object of worship, the sacred footprint, but with specific interpretations from their own religious traditions. The largest ethno-religious community in the island, the Sinhala Buddhists (69% of the population) maintain that the footprint shaped indentation at the top the mountain site is that of Buddha, implanted during his third mythical visit to the island. Tamil Hindus (15%) say it is the footprint of Lord Siva (Sivan-oli-padam). Muslims (8%) maintain that it belongs to Adam (Baba- Adamalei), and similarly Christians (8%) also maintain that it is the footprint of Adam, hence it became “Adam’s Peak”. However, this pilgrimage site, which has been considered a multi-religious site, has now been transformed, or rather constructed, into an ethnic majoritarian Buddhist space. A central concern in this thesis is to identify the historical process which has led to the construction of Sri Pāda as a Buddhist space, concurrent with the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in Sri Lanka. Apart from this political question, I also document everyday devotional practice and longer-term religious history, at this extremely important but surprisingly poorly documented religious site.

This pilgrimage site is situated on a lofty mountain call Samanala (butterfly), which is about 7360 feet (2200 m) above the sea level. It rises dramatically on the south-western edge of the central hills as a part of the boundary between Sabaragamuwa Province and Central Province. This tropical forest mountain territory or Samanala *adaviya* comes under the jurisdiction of the guardian deity Saman who is venerated along with the sacred footprint at this remote jungle temple. The Sri Pāda temple can be approached through two different pilgrimage footpaths: the Southern path from the direction of Ratnapura, the main town of the Province of Sabaragamuwa; and the

¹ I use ‘Sri Pāda’ throughout the thesis quite loosely but not to emphasise its Buddhist connection. Hence, hereafter I use ‘Sri Pāda’ without referring to any religion.

Northern path which approaches via the hill town Hatton, in Central Province. Hence the paths are popularly known among pilgrims as the “Ratnapura route” and the “Hatton route” respectively. The Ratnapura route leading to the southern entrance of the temple starts at the small pilgrimage bazaar town of Palabaddala; from there one has to climb through peak wilderness on a rough uneven narrow path for a distance of 12 kilometres. The Hatton route starts from a small bazaar town called Nallatanni but the climbing distance at this end is less than 6 km. So, compared to the Ratnapura route, the Hatton route is not so difficult to climb. Hence, it has become the most popular route for today’s pilgrims. In addition to these two main routes, there are a few other footpaths operating from neighbouring villages that join the main pilgrimage routes before they reach the mountain top temple. The average time for this arduous sacred journey is about seven hours from Palabaddala, and three to four hours from Nallatanni². From Colombo to Sri Pāda is around 135 km by the Ratnapura route, and 185 km via Hatton. There would then be the climb to the mountaintop where Sri Pāda temple is situated. It is at this temple that the icon of this pilgrimage, the sacred footprint (of Lord Siva, Buddha and Adam), is believed to abide.

Like other major pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka thousands of pilgrims annually make the journey to Sri Pāda to worship the sacred footprint. In the past, many people climbed there with the intention of acquiring religious merit and indeed today they visit for many reasons. The majority of pilgrims coming to Sri Pāda are Sinhala Buddhists, and the second largest group are Hindu Tamil from the tea estates in the area around the temple. But unlike in the past, Hindu, Muslim, Catholic and Protestant groups are notably absent in pilgrimages these days. Though there is a small Hindu element present at Sri Pāda it is largely insignificant when compared

² Palabaddala and Nallatanni are small bazaar towns where south and north entry point to Sri Pāda is respectively located. According to 2001 census former has 967 inhabitants and exclusively Sinhala Buddhist where as latter consist of two separate clusters of Hindu estate Tamil (174) and Sinhala Buddhist (30) families. Nallatanni is a Tamil name literally mean ‘fine water’. ‘Delhousie’ is another name, which came after the opening up this area for the plantation economy in late nineteenth century and Tamil name also came to visible as the integral part of the plantation economy under which (Indian) Tamil were brought to this area as plantation labours. Interestingly, in 1986 this area was renamed as ‘*Sētagangula gama*’ (lit. village of cool water) after the creation new G.N division for the Sinhala people in which whole bazaar town came under this name. Though the name has ‘officially’ changed into Sinhala the most of the pilgrims still referred this area by the Tamil name.

with the number of Buddhists. This situation is quite similar to what Gombrich & Obeyesekere describe at the temple complex at Kataragama in the south of the island (1988: 163-199). Like Kataragama, the Sri Pāda temple is fully controlled by Sinhala Buddhists, and the temple has been constructed or 'ordered' in a manner appropriate to Buddhist forms of worship. At Kataragama, as Gombrich and Obeyesekere have pointed out, 'Tamils still control some of the shrines' (1988: 187), but in the case of Sri Pāda the strong presence of Tamil Hindu priests had completely disappeared by the early 1960s. Hence, today Sri Pāda is strongly dominated by Buddhists. So, one objective of my project is to capture the historical process which has resulted in the construction of Sri Pāda as a predominantly Sinhala Buddhist site.

1.1 Ethnographic History

Within anthropology the turn to history appears to have received legitimacy and gathered momentum in recent years. Between the 1920s and 1970s, the discipline was largely dominated by two overarching 'ahistorical' theoretical discourses, Functionalism and Structuralism. The emphasis on the central methodology of participant observation in 'the field' may also have contributed to the neglect of history in anthropology. Under this methodological approach, anthropologists had been encouraged to concentrate on what Roger Sanjek calls "the ethnographic present" (1991) so the appearance of history in the conventional ethnography was limited. However, in his 1961 lecture "Anthropology and History", Evans-Pritchard appealed for an integration of functionalist and historical interpretation in anthropology. His stress on the need for greater historical understanding in anthropology echoed Levi-Strauss, albeit from a different perspective. For Levi-Strauss had earlier argued, 'a little history - since such, unfortunately, is the lot of the anthropologists - is better than no history at all' (1968: 12; cf. Nissan 1985: 345). But anthropology did not turn towards history until the early 1980's³. By this time the importance of history in anthropology was revived, particularly after the works of well-known anthropologists such as Michael Taussig (1980), Bernard Cohn (1980,

³ But it is important to note here, by early 1960s historical analysis is quite evident in anthropology of Sri Lanka through the works of Ralph Pieris (1956); Edmond Leach (1961) and Gananath Obeyesekere (1964).

1981), Marshall Sahlins (1981, 1985), and also the writings of historians like Ranajit Guha (1982) and his group of subalternists. Indeed, today, both anthropologists and historians probe into the dynamic interrelationship between culture and history, to understand 'culture mediated by history and history mediated by culture' (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 5). This is because many critical historians have realised the need to move from the archive to the field, in order to 'explode the concept of history through the anthropological experience of culture' (Sahlins 1985: 72).

This 'historicization' of anthropology and 'anthropologization' of history has come about as the result of several important processes⁴. One is the decolonisation of the 'third world' nations from the late 1940s through to the 1960s which served to produce questions about the traditional binaries (e.g., 'modern' and 'primitive', 'dynamic' and 'static') of anthropological enquiry. The perceptions and assumptions of European colonisers about the colonised, and the methods by which they categorised the subject populations, came in for radical criticism. Under these conditions anthropologists began to study 'native' intellectual traditions and historical schools, and elaborated upon indigenous renderings of history (Ohnuki-Tierney 1990: 3). This move led to dissatisfaction with conventional anthropological theories and marked the beginning of a new mode of anthropological enquiry.

Many of the more recent critiques of anthropology and ethnography have been elaborated from within the discipline.⁵ Discomfort with anthropological definitions of the 'other' has prompted an interrogation of the process by which this 'other' is created. The 'other', in the practice of early anthropology, was represented as existing 'there and then', far from the 'here and now' of the anthropologist. Hence, the writing of anthropology came to be seen as an essentially political act (Clifford, J. and G. Marcus 1986).

This questioning of the assumptions and premises of anthropology has been complemented by an interrogation of its method. It has been pointed out that the concentration on the 'local', and the great dependence on 'fieldwork' do not necessarily make ethnographic accounts authentic and authoritative representations

⁴ Also for a fruitful discussion on South Asia particularly Sri Lanka, see Roberts (1997: 9-26).

⁵ For an excellent summary of these criticism and counter criticism, see Spencer (1989).

of other societies. The privileging of knowledge derived from experience in the 'field' serves to foreground face-to-face relations of community, neglecting or disregarding other, less localised relations (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 15). The nature of fieldwork in anthropology conceals the way in which the 'field' is constituted, the imperatives and assumptions that underlie the configuration of 'place' and 'culture' in anthropology.⁶ Indeed, the immediacy of fieldwork reduces writing to method, thereby concealing 'the constructed, artificial nature of cultural accounts' (Clifford 1986: 2). Thus ethnography is caught in an 'historical predicament' where it often invents rather than represents cultures. So, for James Clifford ethnographic truths are 'inherently partial---committed and incomplete' (ibid. 7).

However, this provocative critique of anthropology from the perspective of an experimental ethnography has not been received without reservation. There has been criticism made of its tendency to seize upon texts as 'formal objects' totally disregarding their context and the conditions of their production, and also for ignoring the relationship between institutional structures and styles of writings, and for overlooking the linkages between anthropological work and anthropological writing. The most dangerous aspect of this exclusive concern with anthropologists themselves, according to Jonathan Spencer, is that it encourages a trend away from doing anthropology, and towards ever more 'barren criticism' and 'meta-criticism' (Spencer 1989: 145-164). In order to avoid such criticism, he argues for a more open style of ethnographic writing in the sense that 'both writer and reader should be paid explicit attention to the specific historic and social sources of anthropological representations' (ibid. 161). Similarly, there have been other assertions about the usefulness of fieldwork, which acknowledge its limits, yet attempt to rethink and revitalise the practice (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Gupta and Ferguson 1997). After all, anthropology does not speak *for* others, but *about* them. Ethnography is not merely an ineffective attempt at literal translation, rather it is an endeavour to decode the various signs and symbols of culture that 'disguise themselves as universal and natural' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992: 9-10). In the same way, ethnographers do not depend entirely on the observations of fieldwork.

⁶ A critical and insightful analysis of the idea of the 'field', see Gupta and Ferguson (1997: 1-25).

‘Along the way, ethnographers also read diverse sorts of texts books, bodies, buildings, sometimes even cities’ (ibid. 11).

My effort at outlining some of the ongoing debates and discussions in ethnography is directed toward indicating the mood of questioning and introspection that encompasses the discipline. This questioning has led ethnographers to acknowledge not only their own ‘subjectivity’ but also the larger limitations of fieldwork. One of the ways to overcome such limitations has been the ethnographers’ effort to relate their experiences in the field with the reading of texts and archives. These moves have been part of larger attempts to locate peoples within processes and cultures in time, to theorise the relationships of the local to the global, and to question the notion that the ‘visible’ and the ‘doable’ are the only legitimate objects of anthropological study (Des Chene 1997: 66-85). As I have mentioned before, such ethnographers have already created meaningful collaborations of anthropology with history. On the one hand, it has been seen that documents ‘alter the circumstances of fieldwork’ by making the ‘fieldworkers aware of the deep roots of their case studies’ (Fernandez 1990: 119). On the other hand, it has been recognised that documents, by virtue of the fact that they can never all be consulted, and are generally subject to variable interpretation, ‘recast fieldwork from a descriptive and conditional into a reflective and subjunctive mode’ (ibid.). Thus, anthropology in a historical mode has moved away ‘from the objectification of social life to a study of its constitution and construction’ (Cohn 1980: 217).

The close scrutiny and consequent critique of the ways in which colonial states generated knowledge of the people they colonised has also directly influenced the dialogue between history and anthropology. This critique became centrally visible after the groundbreaking work of Edward Said, *Orientalism* appeared in 1978. Said argued that European knowledge about the Orient enabled Europe to define, classify, dominate, and restructure - to thus have authority over - the Orient (1978: 3). This enduring discourse placed a ‘tremendous burden’ upon the spatial distinction between East and West, and endowed and eternalised these totalities with ‘truth’ (Thomas 1994: 23). From its beginning, *Orientalism* was nurtured by scholars and intellectuals, and it continues to live on academically (Said 1978: 2). While it is true

that Said's *Orientalism* frequently relapses into 'essentializing modes' (Clifford 1988: 271), particularly by over-emphasising the negative dimensions of Orientalism and imputing varied discourses of cultural difference with 'hostility and aggression' (Thomas 1994: 26), it also succeeds in questioning a number of important anthropological categories, and challenging the progressive and liberal idea that former stereotypes have been superseded by a more objective way of seeing (Clifford 1988: 271; Thomas 1994: 25; Scott 1999: 1-10).

The immense challenge posed by Said's arguments has prompted scholars to reflect on their assumptions, sources, and methods. Historians and Anthropologists working on South Asia have sought to extend Said's analysis (e.g., Inden 1990; Breckenridge & van der Veer 1993; Scott 1994) by penetrating scholarship on others, a scholarship that viewed the Orientalist in a relation of intellectual dominance over the Orientals whom they studied and represented (Inden 1990: 38). This 'other', carefully constructed by bestowing upon it an unchanging essence, and carefully setting it apart from the 'self' of the Orientalist, had two simultaneous consequences: it served to deprive the 'other' of all agency; and it endowed the Orientalist with the authority to present the Oriental, 'not only to Europeans and Americans but also to the Orientals themselves' (ibid.). All these interventions have prompted historians and ethnographers to abandon the search for the 'real' or the 'essential', and replace it instead with a sense of the production of culture (e.g., Dirks 1992, Harbaman 1994).

The conjunction of history and anthropology is not just 'another new speciality', a means for the writing of hyphenated histories and anthropologies (Cohn 1980: 216). 'Ethnographic history' and 'historical anthropology' are hybrid labels that strive to bring about a meaningful collaboration between the two disciplines so that the subject matter common to both may be reasserted, and the limits of each transcended (ibid.).

One of the main efforts in this thesis is to construct an ethnographic history of Sri Pāda temple through a thick description of the interconnected places, events, and processes of the pilgrimage site. Such ethnographic history is adopted in order to highlight the process of cultural nationalist construction of the pilgrimage site, and to

avoid the problem of objectifying the representation of the past. Hence, in this study ethnographic readings of archives have been situated alongside historical renderings of fieldwork.

1.2 Historical sites or Ethnographic Locations

This study locates the mutations and transformations in the working of Sri Pāda temple within wider, changing relationships of power in pre-colonial (at least from the 12th century), colonial and postcolonial times. It discusses the transformations and alterations in the work of the temple and its religiosity by examining the temple's patronage and control, firstly under the Buddhist kings, secondly under the colonial regimes, and finally under the postcolonial state. In each regime of power Sri Pāda has been remade or reconstructed, as specific political, economic and social conditions have demanded. The most recent transformation of Sri Pāda was conceived in the early postcolonial years, especially the 1950s, by a self-motivated monk, Morontuduve Dhammānanda. Since then, the Buddhist character of Sri Pāda has been prominently displayed through its physical, administrative and 'official' religious domains. It is my intention to explore those domains ethnographically in order to understand this recent transformation at Sri Pāda.

The ethnographic exploration will also be used, not only to understand the Buddhist character of the temple itself but also the pilgrims who visit it. An ethnographic history of the intertwined relationship between the temple of Sri Pāda and its pilgrims makes possible a somewhat different interpretation of recent religious change in Sri Lanka. My study reveals that most of the pilgrims who visit Sri Pāda today belong to lower social classes, particularly peasant and working classes and the religiosity that they express there is somewhat different from that found at other major pilgrimage centres in Sri Lanka. Hence, in my view Sri Pāda manifests major tendencies within contemporary Sinhala Buddhism that have been ethno-historically undocumented so far.

By treating Sri Pāda as both a 'historical site' and an 'ethnographic location', we may unravel its wider implications for Sri Lankan society. So, my analysis avoids overarching theoretical models, but focuses instead on the specificities of historical and ethnographic understanding of how different Sri Pāda have been constructed and

reconstructed both politically and religiously, throughout its long religious history. My thesis attempts to lay bare the contradictory effects of the exercise of power by the pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial states. For example, in pre-colonial time, we see, on one hand, a 'Buddhist king', like Sitavaka Rājasinhe who was patron of a Hindu administrated Sri Pāda, and on the other, a 'Hindu king' like Kīrti Sri Rājasinghe who was fully committed to regaining authority from Hindu priests and vesting it in Buddhist monks. Similarly, codification of laws and customs of the temples, together with the treatment of Buddhist establishments under new legal technologies established by the authority of the British government, ensured the subordination of the Buddhist monks, who controlled wealthy temples like Sri Pāda, to the emerging landed lay élites in the country. However, when the colonial legacy produced an unworkable situation on the management of temples the resourceful monks of Sri Pāda temple continued their efforts to counter the state's authority over the temple and sometime among themselves. Such form of resistance to colonial authority is what Mark Whitaker (1999) has identified, with regard to a Hindu Tamil temple on the east coast of Sri Lanka, as 'amiable incoherence'. The temple élites, according to Whitaker, were able to bring colonial power into a kind of active subservience to temple ideology, a subservience that colonial authorities saw, instead, as a successful application of their policy. Like the Sri Kantacuvaami temple's élites, Buddhist monks at Sri Pāda did not lose their struggles with colonialism. But unlike élites of the Sri Kantacuvaami temple, Buddhist monks at Sri Pāda became embroiled with the rising Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in the 1950's and it was this that eventually laid the foundations for rendering the pluralistic Sri Pāda site into a predominantly Buddhist one.

1.3 Theoretical discourses in the Anthropology of pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is one of the most common phenomena found in religious culture, occurring in just about every major religious tradition. However, until recently the phenomenon was not one that had been well studied by anthropologists. Just as anthropological attention to pilgrimage has grown, so has pilgrimage itself flourished. Pilgrimage has adapted to a purportedly secularising world, and even benefited from contemporary modes of transportation and communication. Planes

now carry Muslim pilgrims to Mecca, and Buddhist pilgrims travel in groups to Buddhist sacred sites in North India (*dambadiva*) and other Buddhist sites in the country, by bus, train and other motor vehicles. Pilgrimage is often more organized, easier and safer, than previously. It is also more widely advertised. Television and newspapers carry stories of pilgrimage events. New pilgrimage sites are popularised. Nationalism and ethno-religious movements and ideologies provide a further impetus to pilgrimage.

Initially, the study of pilgrimage in anthropology generally explored small - scale face - to face – communities, but since 1970s it turned its attention to wider and more extensive groupings and gatherings. According to the functionalist view, pilgrimage is an activity which brings together diverse local communities and social strata into more extensive collectivities. Thus, pilgrimages have been treated as instilling in the participants, consciousness of a wider and more inclusive identity. Such an integrative function of pilgrimage might be regional, national or trans-national: for example, Wolf's analysis of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a way of talking about collective representation of Mexican society (1958: 38). This Durkheimian approach to pilgrimage is sometimes given a Marxist viewpoint. The pilgrimages are implicated in the generation and maintenance of ideologies, which legitimise domination and subordination. For example, Eickelman (1976) sees Islamic pilgrimage in Morocco as preserving and legitimising secular inequalities in the wider society.

However, Victor Turner (1973, 1974; Turner and Turner 1978) was one of the first anthropologists that systematically explored the trans-local implications of pilgrimage. Turner has provided an alternative theoretical formulation by studying Christian pilgrimage traditions in England, Mexico, Ireland and France. Turner defines pilgrimage as a liminal social experience 'betwixt and between the categories of ordinary social life' (1974: 272). Ordinary social life is seen as structured and bound by a more or less distinctive arrangement of mutually dependent institutions and institutional organization of social positions (*ibid.*). In contrast to ordinary social life, pilgrimage is characterised by anti-structure, defined as that which 'tends to ignore, reverse, cut across, or occur outside of structured relationships' (1974: 274). Anti-structure is essentially egalitarian, 'representing the desire for a total,

unmediated relationship between person to person'(ibid.). Turner equates anti-structure with *communitas*, and defines it as a state of normlessness experienced during liminality. *Communitas* liberates social identities 'from conformity to general norms (ibid.) and is quite distinct from highly structured normal relationships. According to Turner, the achievement of *communitas* is the pilgrim's fundamental motivation. Logistical and organizational imperatives invariably compromise this goal. Pilgrimage, in other words, to the degree that it strips actors of their social personae and restores their essential individuality beyond social restrictions.

Turner's arguments had a tremendous impact on those who wanted to give symbolic action an important place in the study of society. They inspired a new generation of ethnographers to study the phenomenon of pilgrimage in diverse religious traditions using his model as point of reference. The notion of '*communitas*' came to be the most debated term in discussions of pilgrimage. Work on pilgrimage in the central Andes (Sallnow 1981, 1987), Nepal (Messerschmidt and Sharma 1981), Sri Lanka (Pfaffenberger 1979), and North India (Van der Veer 1984), using Turner's ideas, exposed the gaps in his arguments. For example, Sallnow reports 'on the journey the various parties of pilgrims from different communities maintained a ritualised distance from one another which accentuated, rather than attenuated, the boundaries between them. At the shrine itself they each maintain their separateness, and never coalesced into a single unified congregation' (1981: 176). Similarly, Pfaffenberger (1979) argues against the Turners' notion of *communitas* by providing ethnographic information in the interethnic pilgrimage site of Kataragama in Sri Lanka:

The symbolism of the myths and rites at the site is interpreted in very different ways by pilgrims of the two traditions, and the flow of Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims to the site is in fact produced by very different processes in the two communities (1979: 269).

He depicts the separation of Hindu and Buddhist pilgrims as so great that *communitas* does not seem to occur. Instead, Kataragama plays a central role in sustaining and exacerbating, rather than ameliorating, some of the negative stereotypes which Tamil and Sinhalese people maintain about each other. Hence, the

norms of equality and ecumenism that prevail at the site are not in themselves sufficient to promote widespread occurrences of *communitas* (ibid.). Also, Alan Morinis contends that the processes of analysis Turner has used 'ignore the ideas, beliefs and motives of individuals in social groups (1987: 261) and he considers pilgrimage to be far more an individual than a social process. Peter Van der Veer saw *communitas* only as an ideological component of the spiritual pilgrimage to Ayodhya for the liberation of the soul (1988: 60). Many of Turner's critics have clearly shown that the reinforcement of social boundaries and distinction in the pilgrimage context, rather than their amelioration or dissolution.

The most sustained response so far to Turner's model has been provided by Eade and Sallnow in their important and exceptionally well integrated edited volume *Contesting the Sacred* (1991). They not only challenge the anti-structure hypothesis but also posit a new general approach (post-modern) to the anthropological study of pilgrimage. One of the main sources of criticism of *communitas*, that it failed to take account of the mundane conflicts inherent in pilgrimage, is used as the very foundation of the new approach. They argue that the idea of anti-structure not only prejudges the complex character of the phenomenon, but also imposes a spurious homogeneity on the practice of pilgrimage in widely differing historical and cultural settings (Eade & Sallnow 1991: 5). Hence, they present pilgrimage as a capacious area capable of accommodating many competing religious and secular discourses:

The power of a shrine....derives in large part from its character as a religious void, a ritual space capable of accommodating diverse meanings and practices though of course the shrine staff might attempt.....to impose a single, official discourse. This...is what confers upon a major shrine its essential, universalistic character: its capacity to absorb and reflect a multiplicity of religious discourses....The sacred centre... appears as a vessel into which pilgrims devoutly pour their hopes, prayers, and aspirations (1991: 15-16).

They assert further that pilgrimage as an institution cannot actually be understood as a universal or homogeneous phenomenon but should instead be deconstructed into

historically and culturally specific instances (1991: 3). And they view it as necessary to develop a view of pilgrimage not merely as a field of social relations but also as a realm of competing discourses (ibid. 4). Though they have formulated this theoretical approach by analysing Christian pilgrimage it has a more general relevance to the anthropology of pilgrimage.

Simply tracing the contrasts between *communitas* and the competing discourse perspective is tempting, and to some extent, revealing. However, though both perspectives have considerable differences, they are concerned with broad patterns of social relations, interactions within and between groups or communities. Hence, in this study I suggest that both perspectives can be equally useful for analysing both the pilgrimage site, as well as the journey to it. My point here is that the anthropology of pilgrimage must be able to speak to more than one theoretical paradigm at a time, but so far seems divided between Turner's *communitas* and the Eade and Sallnow post-modern notion of 'competing discourse'. The latter may emerge from an emphasis on discrepant discourse, scepticism towards grand narratives and mistrust of the very category of pilgrimage, but as Dubisch notes (1995: 45), the Turnerian approach itself calls attention to post-modern issues of performance and staging. Simon Coleman has recently shown how both theoretical perspectives have considerably overlapped each other, rather than being entirely mutually antagonistic (2002: 355-370) and suggests that, in order to move from this theoretical deadlock, 'pilgrimage' needs to be used as a case-study for understanding human behaviour, than focussing on it as an institution or firmly bounded category of action (ibid. 365).

Following Coleman, I am going to suggest through my material on Sri Pāda that both theoretical perspectives can be fruitfully used. This suggests that our understanding of 'pilgrimage' cannot be easily limited to either theoretical stance. For example, the contest over control of Sri Pāda temple management affairs between lay élites and Buddhist monks, and among them, shows that a pilgrimage site is not necessarily free from conflicts and resentment. However, this approach, as we shall see, helps to understand the more 'egalitarian' behaviour of newly emerged pilgrims' groups, particularly those I call 'youth pilgrims'. But equally, it has visible limitations when analysing the 'traditional' organisation of pilgrim groups whose behavioural pattern

is different from 'youth pilgrims'. 'Traditional' pilgrim groups are basically arranged in rigid hierarchal manner. So, unlike the new 'youth pilgrims', other pilgrims are not free from hierarchical roles but subject to the authority of a group leader called *nadegura*. Further elaboration of this point will be taken again in the Chapter 6. As Coleman puts it: 'Neither [Turnerian] *communitas* nor contestation [Competing discourse] should themselves become fetishized in order to produce neatly symmetrical anthropological theory, made up of views that appear to constitute a simple binary opposition' (2002: 363). To overcome such theoretical adequacy 'we should not allow such ethnographically rich spaces [pilgrimage sites] to become prisons of limited comparison' (ibid. 366).

1.4 Anthropology of Pilgrimage in South Asia

Anthropological studies relating to South Asian pilgrimage have been of several types. Interest in the field can be traced back to at the time when Victor Turner was writing on this subject (notably, the works of Vidyarthi 1961, 1979; Jha 1985, 1995; Bhardwaj 1973 and Bharati 1970). Among the relevant ethnographies for South Asia there are a number of studies which mainly concentrate on describing a pilgrimage centre or sacred place. Notable studies in India include Appadurai (1981), Eck (1982), Fuller (1984, 1992, 2003), Good (1987, 2004), Van der Veer (1988, 1994), Parry (1994) and Sax (1995), and for Sri Lanka, Obeyesekere (1978, 1981), Seneviratne (1978), Stirrat (1982, 1992), and Nissan (1985, 1988). In general, the emphasis of these studies is on priests, the organization of the pilgrim centres, and other occupants of the pilgrimage centres; in other words they are more 'sacred place' oriented rather than being focussed on the pilgrims themselves.

However, some other studies concern the pilgrims themselves, although these can overlap with information provided by sacred place-oriented studies. For example, the work of Ann Gold (1988) is a village-based ethnography, which includes extensive discussion of some of the pilgrimage undertaken by people from her fieldwork area. Gold's study is the first anthropological description of the rapidly expanding form of 'motorized pilgrimage'. A study by E. V. Daniel (1984) differs from Gold's in being of a 'walking pilgrimage' in South India in which Daniel participated fully. Also,

Alexander Gath (1998) has paid much attention to journeying aspect of a group of Syrian Christians of Kerala in South India. There is no such study in which the anthropologist becomes an active participant in a Sri Lankan pilgrimage. However, there are some notable studies in South Asian pilgrimage (Morinis 1984; Obeyesekere 1981; Fuller 1984; Stirrat 1992) which are based mostly on observation at a pilgrim centre, not participation in a full sense, but aim to provide supplementary information, by means of interviews, random survey and conversations, in order to provide a fuller picture of pilgrims and their concerns. This approach has been taken at pilgrim centres where 'the journeying component' is not strongly emphasized. To avoid such bias, in my study both the 'centre' and the 'journeying' component of Sri Pāda pilgrimage are treated and explored equally.

The pilgrimage literature for South Asia, in general, lends greater support to the competing discourse perspective than to the Turnerian approach. However, most academic studies of pilgrimage in South Asia have concentrated on the explicitly religious domain, on the major religious traditions and on regional pilgrimage cults, and has placed far less emphasis on pilgrimage in secularised contexts such as pilgrimage service economy, that has grown around pilgrimage centres, politics, nationalism, ethnicity, gender, pilgrimage sites associated with dead cultural heroes, touristic dimensions of pilgrimage, educational visits to sacred and historic location, or simply pilgrimage for the sake of journeying (for 'fun'). According to Reader, this aspect of pilgrimage can be considered to be a modern 'secularised' form of pilgrimage (1993: 5-10). But James Clifford (1997) argues 'sacred' meanings of pilgrimage tend to predominate even though people go on pilgrimages for secular as well as religious reasons. This indicates that pilgrimage is not only connected to its sacred world but also connected in complex ways to the non-sacred world around it. Obviously, it is a very hard exercise for an anthropologist who focuses on a particular pilgrimage site to explore all the dimensions of the phenomenon. Therefore, given the nature of my study, I pay much attention to religious, ethno-nationalist, political and journeying aspects of Sri Pāda pilgrimage, and I also explore to some extent the 'secular' activities, particularly the 'pleasure' dimension

of Sri Pāda pilgrimage that is clearly evident among the ‘youth pilgrims’ and some pilgrims from the proletarian area of the capital city of Colombo.

1.5 Pilgrimage in the Anthropology of Sri Lanka

Anthropological studies of pilgrimage in Sri Lanka mainly derive theoretical orientation from the functionalist approach (Obeyesekere 1966, 1978, 1981; Evers 1972; Seneviratne 1978). However, more recent studies by Pfaffenberger (1979), Nissan (1985, 1988), Stirrat (1982, 1991, 1992), Whitaker (1999), and Bastin (2002), mainly put their theoretical arguments against such a ‘universalistic’ perspective. For example, Nissan (1988) has pointed to the incorporation of pilgrimage sites and associated motifs into a broad political discourse propagating an ethnically biased, Sinhala Buddhist nationalist agenda in Sri Lanka. She illustrates this through one particular pilgrimage centre, Anuradhapura, which became important for revivalists and nationalists as a national centre for the Sinhala Buddhist population. And she also emphasises the importance of considering multiple historical representations of Buddhist pilgrimage centres in Sri Lanka, rather than studying them as a unified tradition.

There are a number of anthropological and sociological works on pilgrimage centres in Sri Lanka. With regards to Buddhist pilgrimage sites, notable works include H.L. Seneviratne at the Temple of Tooth relic of the Buddha in the capital city of the former Kandyan kingdom (1978), Gananath Obeyesekere at the deity shrine of Kataragama in the Southern province (1977, 1978, 1981), Elizabeth Nissan at Anuradhapura, the first capital of pre-colonial Sri Lanka (1985), Jonathan Walters’ work on Kelaniya near capital city of Colombo (1996) and Mihintale near Anuradhapura (1998:133-162), and Steven Kemper (1991: 148-160) at Seruvila in the Eastern Province⁷. The work of Pfaffenberger (1979), Whitaker (1999), and Bastin (2002) on Hindu pilgrimage sites is also notable here, as is Jock Stirrat on Catholic pilgrimage sites (1982, 1991, 1992). Yet, there are more important pilgrimage centres, both Buddhist and Hindu, even Islamic, to be studied in the

⁷ For a general discussion on Buddhist pilgrimage, see Gombrich (1971), Kekulawala (1979), and Holt (1982).

country. In this regard, Sri Pāda is one such exceptionally important place that has not been fully studied by anthropologists, apart from brief mentions in passing (e.g., Gombrich 1971, Spencer 1990d)⁸. In other words, in the context of ethnographic studies of Sri Lanka, there is a lack of empirical material on Sri Pāda and this encouraged me to undertake the present study. At the broadest thematic level, this work would be a new addition to the growing body of anthropological literature on the relationship between Buddhism and Sinhala national identity in particular (e.g., Obeyesekere 1972, 1996; Tambiah 1986, 1992; Kapferer 1988; Spencer 1990; Scott 1994; Seneviratne 1999; Abeysekara 2002) and pilgrimage studies in general (e.g., Turner 1974, 1978; Eade & Sallnow 1991).

Each of these pilgrimage centres has a major annual festival. For example, Anuradhapura fills with pilgrims for the Poson festival, which falls on the full moon in June, followed by the Kataragama festival in July and the August festival of the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy. The annual festivals in Munnesvaram are held around February-March and September-October. Similarly, the largest number of pilgrims visit Sri Pāda between February and April, particularly during its main festival in March (*Mādin Pōya*).

Similarly, each centre has developed its own pattern of religiosity. For example, Kataragama shows more expressive forms (externalised) of worship, practising *bhakti* devotionism with vigorous dancing, and sometimes displays of ecstatic emotionalism such as fire-walking and hanging from hooks. The Kataragama pilgrimage is notable for the fact that expressive form of worship at the site was originally an almost exclusive concern of Tamil Hindus. The recent involvement of Sinhala pilgrims in more expressive form of *bhakti* devotionism at Kataragama is one of the key themes which Obeyesekere has explored in his study. But the majority of pilgrims going to Kataragama do not engage in any externalised devotional religious activities. Their primary activity is making and fulfilling vows by making various kinds of offerings to the god. Yet, the ecstatic forms of religious behaviour are highly visible during the festival (see Obeyesekere 1981 and Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988).

⁸ But there are few studies have carried out by other scholars, notably Paranavitana (1956), Aksland (1990), Ratnapala (2001) and Dissanayake (2001).

In contrast to the religiosity of Kataragama pilgrims, Nissan's study in the sacred city of Anuradhapura has shown a different type of religiosity (1988). Pilgrims go to the sacred city mainly for worshiping and to make merit, and emphasize restraint and calm in physical and emotional manner (externalised devotionism is absent). An attitude of internalised devotion is appropriate for such merit making. The pilgrims to the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy are different far from Anuradhapura and Kataragama. According to Seneviratne, pilgrims come to see the great annual pageant of the former Kandyan kingdom while many pilgrims make offerings in the Temple of the Tooth as well (1979). Unlike Anuradhapura and Kandy, devotees come to Munnesvaram, according to Bastin, to engage in non-merit-making activities such as practise of sorcery and counter sorcery rites and seek alleviation from misfortune and other forms of suffering (2002) which are hard to find at Sri Pāda. Stirrat (1992) interprets the shift of devotional interest of Sinhala Catholic pilgrims from the older, place-specific shrines to the new person-centred cults. The charismatic cult leaders, actively invoke particular saints to salve the misfortunes of their devotees. Such breakaway person-centred shrines from the older establishment offer yet another perspective on bodily healing in the context of (post) modern pilgrimage in Sri Lanka. But such development is hard to find at the ancient pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda. Interestingly, at Sri Pāda, as I will explain in Chapter 6 and 7, both external (e.g., singing devotional songs and passing friendly greetings) and internal devotionism are emphasised as form of worship, albeit in different ways from these other centres.

All these pilgrimage centres are of national significance and draw large crowds, Kandy and Anuradhapura being almost exclusively Buddhist, whilst Kataragama, Munnesvaram and Sri Pāda draw pilgrims from all of Sri Lanka's religious groups; predominantly Buddhist and Hindus, but also Muslims and Catholics. These centres have not all been equally important in the past. However, due to low country Buddhist revivalist activities in the latter part of the nineteenth century, most of these pilgrimage centres have become of national significance. For example, pilgrimage

centres like Anuradhapura raised its prominence during the colonial era and has been recreated as a national heartland since independence of Sri Lanka (see Nissan 1985). Like other major pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka there is an association between Sri Pāda and Sinhala Buddhist kingship. However, those who have discussed political aspects of these pilgrimage centres, such as Seneviratne (1978) and Evers (1972), have chosen centres in which the hierarchical, royal aspect of Buddhist political symbolism is salient, and are thus able to see continuity between pre-colonial and post-colonial expressions of statehood. Moreover, these studies are biased towards the perspectives of a particular kind of temple associated, primarily with royalty and hierarchy, but they have ignored historical dynamics of political symbolism in these centres. My study, as in other recent studies (Nissan 1985, Whitaker 1999 and Bastin 2002) will deal with those issues in order to explore multiple histories of Sri Pāda pilgrimage site and read those histories against the hegemonic nationalist history being constructed around the pilgrimage site as a part of its 'Buddhicization'.

1.6 The Anthropology of 'Sinhala Buddhism'

The disciplinary identification of "Buddhism" in Sri Lanka as an anthropological object began in the late 1950s as part of growing field of "peasant" or village studies in South and Southeast Asian societies. In Sri Lanka, the work of Gananath Obeyesekere, Edmond Leach, Michael Ames, and Nur Yalman is central to this inaugural moment. These anthropologists have identified the integration of the diverse beliefs and practices of Sinhala Buddhists within a religious worldview that is in accord with fundamental Theravada Buddhist teachings. Within this academic exercise Obeyesekere (1963, 1966, 1970) insisted on the term 'Sinhalese Buddhism' to convey the idea of the full variety of religious practice, popular and esoteric, in Sri Lankan Buddhism⁹.

Most of these studies on the anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka present an idealised, often perfectly integrated and highly Weberian or functionalist view. The

⁹ David Scott calls attention to the importance of Obeyesekere's seminal essay 'The Great Tradition and the Little in the Perspective of Sinhalese Buddhism,' (1963), which reconceptualized the Great Tradition and Little Tradition distinction in a manner that emphasized the integration of Sinhala Buddhist belief and practice, in contrast to earlier work that stressed a disjunction between "Buddhism" and "animism" in Sinhala religion (see Scott 1994: 173-203).

continuity of this kind of theoretical approaches in anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka can even be seen in recent studies. For example, it is addressed in the recent work of H.L. Seneviratne *The Work of Kings: The New Buddhism in Sri Lanka* (1999), which is heavily grounded in the Weberian model of Scholarship. Such questionable theoretical formulation on the 'anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism' is not only considered in Seneviratne's works but also in the works of other anthropologists who belong to a similar intellectual tradition. For example works of Gananath Obeyesekere (1963, 1966, 1984, 1995), Stanley Tambiah (1976, 1992), Richard Gombrich (1971, 1988), Kitsiri Malalgoda (1976) and others are notable in this regard. The analyses they provide largely revolve around the popular binary categories such as "village" and "urban" or "the great tradition", and "the little tradition", "worldly" and "other worldly", "orthodox" and "syncretistic", "tradition" and "modern".

However, recent works on religion, identity and politics by the later generation of anthropologists have criticized this kind of conventional, essentialised theoretical conceptualisation in order to further our understanding of the anthropology of Sri Lanka in general, and Buddhism in particular. For example Jonathan Spencer has criticized the Weberian and functionalist position in his essay on 'Tradition and Transformation: Recent Writing on the Anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka' (1990). As he puts it 'the idea of the traditional is no longer an innocent analytic category in Sri Lanka but has become a central weapon in arguments about what Buddhism is and what it should try to be in the contemporary world' (1990:130) and 'almost all who engage in this argument,...sooner or later seek to legitimate their version of what is essential by appeal to some idea of the 'traditional' (ibid. 138). Spencer's main thrust is to disclose the unproblematic use of "tradition" when understanding or formulating different forms of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. But the most influential criticism came from the work of David Scott (1994) who argues for a radical rethinking of historical change within the context of Sinhala Buddhism. He questions the ways in which anthropological and colonial production of knowledge about religion and ritual has objectified Buddhism in an unproblematic way (1994). Scott has proposed groundbreaking approaches to theorizing the relation between colonialism, anthropology and culture in Sri Lankan anthropology in particular, and

anthropology in general. He has suggested that in order to understand “Buddhism”, we need to drop our anthropological formulation that retained the colonial preoccupation with marking the distinction between an authentic Buddhism and Spirit religion, and instead to begin asking about the ways in which Buddhists in Sri Lanka make claims about what Buddhism is, the kinds of social and political projects into which the figures of the Buddhist tradition get mobilized, and to leave Buddhists to say what Buddhism is (1994: 242)¹⁰. In short, his concern was to locate genealogies about what constitutes “authentic Buddhism”. This radical approach to the anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka has been further developed by the recent study of Ananda Abeysekara. In his award winning text (2002), *Colors of the Robe: Religion, Identity, and Difference*, Abeysekara examines ‘the formations and deformations of contingent relations between ‘religious’ [Buddhist] identity and difference’ (2002: 04) by turning to several native debates that challenged and shaped ideas about what can and cannot count as “Buddhism.” In other words, he explores how authoritative traditions become created, challenged, and established in varying conjunctures of Buddhist tradition in postcolonial Sri Lanka. Abeysekara brings his theoretical argument against the conventional anthropological formulation of ‘Buddhism’, ‘politics’, ‘violence’ and ‘monkhood’ by focusing his attention on the processes by which ‘authoritative understanding about Buddhism and monastic identity’ is produced (2002:56). He focuses on ‘the ways in which diverse persons, practices, discourses, and institutions conjoin to foreground competing definitions about ‘Buddhism’ and its ‘others’ (ibid. 3) in order to demonstrate his theoretical framework that ‘what can and cannot count as Buddhism, culture, and difference, alter within specific native debates’ (ibid.). Drawing the attention to several native debates pertaining to ‘what kinds of ‘Buddhist’ practice should be performed by whom’ (2002: 41), as well as ‘what persons and practices constitute Buddhist monkhood’ (ibid. 43). How these are fashioned and debated transcend not only a monk’s own tactical rules and logic of formation but also disciplinary attempts at canonizing them as universal categories (ibid. 239). Such critical studies appeal to us

¹⁰ Jonathan Spencer has contested this claim of Scott (see *American Ethnologist*, 1996: 192). But Scott is not alone here Philip Almond (1988) and Charles Hallisey (1995) also investigate nineteenth-century European constructions and representations of Buddhism as well. Hallisey demonstrates some of the ways in which modern Asian patterns of discourse have marked European representations of Buddhism.

to rethink about the conventional anthropological formulation of Sri Lanka's Buddhism.

This new approach to anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka has heavily undermined the way in which 'Buddhism' has been constructed and analysed so far, particularly the way in which conceptualization of 'radical' changes that have taken place in Buddhism during the 19th and 20th centuries. According to this new approach, the "theoretical problem" of the study of Sinhala Buddhism was developed in terms of "Buddhism and Society" rather than to investigate the relationship between "text and context". The former gives us, according to Scott, the illusion that Buddhism and society are two separate entities (1994: 178). Even though this anthropology of Buddhism avoids the pitfalls of earlier understanding of Sinhala religion, it also constructs an "authentic Buddhism" (ibid.).

The transformation of this "authentic Buddhism" (e.g., Theravada Buddhism) has been the dominant subject matter in the anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka. One recalls at once such notable book-length examples as Gombrich's *Precept and Practice: Traditional Buddhism in the Rural Highlands of Ceylon* (1971) and *Theravada Buddhism: A Social History from Ancient Benares to Modern Colombo* (1988)¹¹. In the latter Gombrich develops social explanations for "three major points of change" that have occurred in Theravada's history: the foundation of Buddha's Sāsana in India some 2500 years ago; its migration from India to Sri Lanka, where a reformulation of Buddhist identity happened; and in which a transformation took place in response and reaction to the influence of the Protestant Christian missionary contingent that accompanied the British colonization of Sri Lanka. Gombrich argues that 'pre-colonial Buddhism' was marked by fluid boundaries; religious tolerance that was mixed with indigenous strands of religion, particularly Tamil Saivite and Vāddā's religion. 'Colonial Buddhism', on the other hand was mixed with the 'colonial religion' of political authority which was impervious to change at the popular level. Such intolerance, by Gombrich's definition, cannot be Buddhist, so it is attributed to Protestant Christianity and its evangelical spread, which profoundly affected the nature of the Buddhist revival. Revivalist Buddhism, for Gombrich,

¹¹ Here not to mention an important work of Kitsiri Malalgoda: *Buddhism in Sinhalese Society 1750-1900: A study of Religious Revival and Change*, 1976.

began to assert religious boundaries and religious purity and thereby created an intolerant Buddhism.

The effect of this gap and the most recent 'transformation' of religion of Sinhala people are further identified in *Buddhism Transformed: Religious Change in Sri Lanka* that based on collaborative research project that began in the 1970s by Richard Gombrich and Gananath Obeyesekere. In this provocative detailed text, they identify the stages of how Buddhism has been "transformed" in Sri Lanka. They differentiate between three forms of Sinhala Buddhist religion: traditional Buddhism – the Theravada of the Buddha, the sangha, and the Pali Canon, that implies that some kind of authentic Buddhism has existed; "spirit religion" and "Protestant Buddhism" and they show how the spirit religion and Protestant Buddhism have interacted and mixed recently in complex ways and such new development is labelled as "Post Protestant Buddhism".

"Protestant Buddhism", a term previously used by Obeyesekere (1972), started in the late nineteenth century under the influence of Anagarika Dharmapala. It was at once a protest against Christian cultural encroachment which incorporated its style and content from Protestantism. It was a style of Buddhism that encouraged a new, this-worldly asceticism for the laity and a return to the text - based 'authentic' form of Buddhism¹². Protestant Buddhism appeals to the more privileged urban middle class and reflects the cultural values of a bourgeois Protestantism. It also blurs the sharp dichotomy between the hierarchically dominant monks and the subordinate laity and encourages the greater capacity of the individual to seek his or her own salvation without the need of intermediaries and traditional authorities. The protestant Buddhists have denounced the popular religion of their fellow Sinhala Buddhists as being corrupted and 'non-Buddhist', one, which is Gombrich and Obeyesekere say, labelled as "Spirit religion".

Spirit religion, which is defined at one point as the non-Buddhist part of the religion of Sinhala Buddhists, is nothing new. Deities, such as Vishnu, Natha, Saman, and

¹² Spencer argues that the appeal to the textual tradition was not simply imported as part of the culture of colonialism but it always has been an integral part of Theravada Buddhism (1990 130-131).

Kataragama and the goddess Pattini, Planetary deities, demons, and the manipulation of their powers have long been an integral part of Sinhala Buddhism. It deals not with Buddhist soteriology, but rather with mundane aims and worldly affairs. The recent transformation in the Spirit religion is called by them “Post Protestant Buddhism”; a different religious style which combines ecstatic devotionism of Hindu *bhakti*, and the propitiation of the formerly out-worldly Buddha for in-worldly benefits particularly through the Bodhi *pūjā* ritual. This new development in Sinhala Buddhist religiosity has been identified in broad psychological terms and they attribute these major changes to the failure of the economy to meet the aspirations of the people, and a political system which encourages unrealistic aspirations, mass universal education, which, in turn, increases social aspirations too. One way of relieving psychological tensions that arise from these changes, for Gombrich and Obeyesekere, is to rely on new forms of religiosity (De Silva 2000:5). They have noted how it is within this context Sinhala Buddhists have to frequent pilgrimage sites like Kataragama and Munnesvaram in increasing numbers. Surprisingly, they did not talk about increasing numbers at other pilgrimage sites such as Sri Pāda and Anuradhapura. The focus only on popular sites like Kataragama would completely miss the kind of transformation that has been taking place in the primordial ‘great sacred sites’ like Sri Pāda.¹³

Rather than engage in discussion regarding the pedigree of certain aspects of contemporary Sinhala Buddhism and thereby participate in specific Sinhala Buddhist discourses concerning what is “authentic Buddhism” and what is not, I am interested in considering what Buddhism is, the kinds of social and political projects into which the figures of the Buddhist tradition get mobilized, and to leave Buddhists to say what it is Buddhism is. This is the project that has been suggested by recent scholars on anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

Following Gombrich & Obeyesekere’s formulation, I am reluctant to distinguish contemporary religious practices by Sinhala Buddhists, particularly in regard to Sri

¹³ The popular sites that Gombrich and Obeyesekere have focused don’t come under the sixteen ‘great sacred sites’ (*solosmastana*) in the country. My point here is this, these primordial pilgrimage sites but not all, similar to ‘modern sites’ have moved from finding solutions to the other worldly matters to the issues relating to this worldly human suffering. Such changes occurred in those centres, my view, has not been adequately addressed in the anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism.

Pāda, as belonging exclusively to either 'protestant Buddhism' or 'post-protestant Buddhism,' or 'village Buddhism' or 'urban Buddhism'. Sinhala Buddhist worship at Sri Pāda has a long history. For this reason I am inclined to regard the worship at Sri Pāda as popular religion that also expresses the sentiments of Buddhist revitalization. I am not seeking to identify a unitary whole, but I do wish to avoid the style of dichotomous reasoning that I regard to be a critical feature of theoretical formulations by scholars such as Gombrich and Obeyesekere.

Popular elements of Sinhala Buddhism may be designated as doing just that in popular understandings. Many Sinhala Buddhists identify elements of their religion as pre-Buddhist, and this classification extends to identifying other elements as non-Buddhist. The history of Buddhism may itself include heterogeneity, cultism and revival, as well as influences from Hinduism, Jainism, Islam and Christianity, and even influence from an orientalist scholarship that sought to ascribe to the vast diversity of Buddhism a sense of unity and coherence. However, in the eyes of many Sinhala Buddhists the religion found at temples like Sri Pāda is the ancient and original religion of Buddha. This view was critical to re-origination of Buddhism particularly in late 19th and early 20th century. Through this re-origination, the ancient nature of a temple complex (or a pilgrimage site) like Sri Pāda was reproduced or re-ordered as antecedent to Buddhism. Thus going on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda by a Sinhala Buddhist is not only regarded as a journey to sacred site, it is also a journey to a site of primordial religious expression, a site of the origins of Buddhism. Buddhist pilgrimage sites are primordial sites containing Buddhist relics such as marks of the Buddha's presence as at Sri Pāda, or bodily relics such as the Tooth or symbols of the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka such as the Anuradhapura *bo* tree. Pilgrimage to these sites, no doubt, rekindles the Buddhist self and takes the form of a journey that expresses the Buddhist self while making merit and other forms of personal plea. Sri Pāda is not exceptional in this regard. However, unlike other primordial pilgrimage sites, the popularity of such practices at Sri Pāda has continually flourished throughout its long religious history. The pilgrims' practices, rather than their styles of religiosity at Sri Pāda, undermine the Weberian antinomies (other-worldly/ this-worldly, Buddha/deities) that have dominated the anthropology

of Sinhala Buddhism in Sri Lanka. The types of religious behaviour that can be found at Sri Pāda have further complicated the conventional anthropological understanding of “this” and “other” worldly phenomena. This is because pilgrims bring their ‘this worldly matters’ to the Buddha (his relic: footprint) and the God Saman, by deploying different ritual technologies ranging from vow making and offerings to simple acts like ‘*prarthanāva*’ and ‘grievance notes’.

It is not so important to understand when such practices began to evolve at Sri Pāda temple but rather that these practices, oriented to Buddha, or more precisely to his relics are not corroborated with the wisdom of conventional anthropological interpretation of popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka. Thereby I argue pilgrims go to Sri Pāda not necessarily to deal with the ‘other worldly’ or ‘transcendent’ matters but largely to seek solutions to their day to day, mundane problems, with the help (*pihita*) of both the sacred footprint (Buddha or relic of Buddha) and its guardian, God Saman. In a recent study Kevin Trainor (1998) has shown how the Buddha’s presence and authority in his relics have played a vital role in more routine phenomena like pilgrimage, Buddhist processions (*perahāras*), and even the current lay-Buddhist religiosity. This is quite contrary to what Gombrich and Obeyesekere conclude “for modern devotees the figure of the Buddha is inadequate to their emotional needs” (1988: 455).

My argument can be extended from relic worship to the deity propitiation in popular Buddhism. According to Obeyesekere a god like Saman is now disfavoured by the people because of his lack of involvement in the mundane world, due to the enhancement of his benevolent attributes and Buddhist virtues (1984: 65). And those deities now have been replaced by deities such as Kali and Suniyam, especially Kataragama, with their “dark sides,” and immediate worldly aims, including vengeance and other morally suspect motives (see Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988). I agree with this “startling development,” but I don’t agree with their claim that a benevolent god like Saman has fallen out of favour with the people. My limited empirical and historical information does not appear to warrant such an assertion. The growing popularity of deity Saman at Sri Pāda in particular and in

Sabaragamuva in general, offers a challenge to their claim. The intrinsic quality of Saman as a deity of *karūṇava* or ‘compassion’ (a fundamental Buddhist value) is vital to his popularity at Sri Pāda. People ask for his *karūṇava* on matters ranging from having a safe journey (to Sri Pāda), to personal crisis. Interestingly, as my data suggests, most of the people who ask *karūṇava* of the deity Saman at Sri Pāda belong to disadvantaged social classes: peasants and the working classes. These are the groups who most need *karūṇava* from their superiors.

Let me connect this point with the existing anthropological literature on the sociology of popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka, particularly with the work of Gananath Obeyesekere (1977, 1978, 1982) and Bruce Kapferer (1983, 1997). Both Obeyesekere and Kapferer agree that deity worship in contemporary Sri Lanka is more apparent as a middle class practice than it is as a working class or peasant practice. As I argue in Chapter 8, their formulation is problematic when compared with the sociological background of pilgrims visiting the national pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda. As far as Buddhists are concerned, Sri Pāda is a site of worship oriented to Buddha and the deity Saman, but it largely attracts pilgrims from ‘peasant and working class’ social backgrounds rather than from the so-called “middle class”. This suggests the looseness of the class analysis of popular worship in contemporary Sri Lanka. Some of the issues I have raised above, in the existing literature of anthropology of popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka will be further examined throughout the thesis.

1.7 Chapters and Arguments

This thesis is divided into two distinct parts, that are, however, interconnected. The first section, comprising Chapters two to five explores the major competing discourses that have arisen throughout the political and religious history of Sri Pāda. The final part (Chapters six-eight) focuses on its’ religiosity and the social composition of pilgrims who visit there and explores aspects of social factors in the practices of worship.

As far as each individual Chapter is concerned in Chapter 2, I examine the relations between the kings, monks, and the temple over ‘pre-colonial’ histories to assess the

impact of the changes that occurred after the temple was 'politically recognised' by the pre-colonial 'Buddhist' states. How they ordered and re-ordered the Sri Pāda temple's administration and ritual order in different 'regime of power' is the central theme of this Chapter and similarly, such projects of ordering Sri Pāda temple affairs in the colonial and postcolonial powers are discussed in the subsequent Chapters. I explain these projects through a theoretical argument formulated by Eade and Sallnow (1990) who argue that sacred centres cannot actually be understood as a universal or homogeneous phenomenon but should instead be treated as places where constant contestations are evident.

This argument is further discussed in Chapter Three in relation to the governing of the Sri Pāda temple. One of the main tasks here is to excavate such disputes, contestations and discrepancies that arose over the governing of Sri Pāda temple under different hegemonic powers in which Sri Pāda temple had operated, particularly under colonial and postcolonial governance. Here I also engage with the Foucauldian notion of "governmentality" and particularly with its later reformulation by the scholars like David Scott (1999), Gyan Prakash (1999) and Peter Pels (1997) where they have conceptualised "colonial governmentality". The problem arises here whether the colonial governmentality can be regarded as a "whole" or whether it is a set of technologies that lend themselves to selective adoption into different governmentalities. The various historical information that I present in this Chapter suggests that governmentality cannot be regarded as a singular colonial strategy. As Pels reminds us 'we ought to study the struggles going on among groups of colonizers and colonized and between them, not only over the control of governmental technologies, but also over their appropriateness, application and desirability' (1997: 174). In the case of the governance of Sri Pāda temple the disputes, disagreement, conflicts, and debates not only occurred among/between groups of colonized communities but also among colonizers; particularly on the appropriation and the application of 'governmental technologies' in the control of temple's affairs.

Chapter Four and Five readdress the process by which the Sri Pāda temple has been remade or reconstituted as a hegemonic 'Buddhist site' concurrent with the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in postcolonial Sri Lanka. In Chapter Four I concentrate on the politico-cultural momentum through which the postcolonial Sri Pāda temple changed from "sacred site" to a "Buddhist site". I argue that the Buddhization of the 'sacred site' began after the control of the temple management was regained by Buddhist monks, particularly by the enthusiastic monk, Morontuduve Dhammānanda (1890-1970) and later by his successors. I discuss how Dhammānanda and his successors have given prominence to the physical, administrative and ritual structures of the temple and imposed a Sinhala Buddhist stamp on the whole sacred space. The architectural and administrative structures of the temple, I argue, are not 'ancient' but remarkably 'modern'. Likewise, the present 'official' ritual domain of the temple is not necessarily a 'traditional' one because it was more recently constructed or remade with the 'traditional' flavour of 'official' Buddhist temple's rituals oriented to Buddha and deities. While I examine the architectural and administrative projects in detail in Chapter Four, I move my discussion of the ritual project or 'official religiosity' into Chapter Five. The regular rites of the day, week, month, and the "inaugural" and the "closing" down ceremonies of Sri Pāda pilgrimage, as well as the most important annual '*Mādin pinkama*' (lit. merit making ritual) held in March are given more focus in Chapter Five. Having done so I turn more specifically from the practice of official religiosity to the world of pilgrims who come to Sri Pāda for various purposes. Chapter Six provides the general description of the Buddhists journeying to Sri Pāda, and I compare some of the materials present on their journey with the existing limited literature of a similar kind in the anthropology of pilgrimage in South Asia in order to show unique features that are inherent to the pilgrims journeying to Sri Pāda and the limitation of main theoretical approaches of the Anthropology of pilgrimage in understanding them.

My attempt in Chapter Seven is not merely to provide an ethnographic account on pilgrims' activities at the temple but also to give a complex of meanings or motives underlying these activities. I stress that, as in the past, pilgrims not come to Sri Pāda only for worshipping (*vadinna*) the scared footprint in order to acquire merit (*pin*),

but also to gain help (*pihita*) from the ‘sacred foot print’ and the guardian deity Saman in regard to mundane matters by making vows, wishes and offerings. Thus, I argue, the contemporary journey to Sri Pāda equally stresses what Morinis calls both “devotional” and “instrumental” aspects of pilgrimage (1992:10-11). However, I also show that considerable numbers of people, particularly youth groups visit there for pleasure (*vinode*) rather than because of any great devotion to the sacred footprint or the deity Saman. The types of religious behaviour that can be found at Sri Pāda, I argue, have further complicated the “this” and “other” worldly syndrome, which has been dominated in the analysis of such behaviour in Anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism.

In the final Chapter, I commence my discussion on the sociological background of Sri Pāda pilgrims. And in comparison to the other national pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka, I argue, the pilgrims who come to Sri Pāda have ‘peasant and working class’, rather than ‘middle class’ social backgrounds. Within this class analysis, the two different groups of pilgrims: ‘youth’ and ‘Colombo’ are discussed to show the heterogeneous nature of class affiliation. In addition to class affiliation I also demonstrate the regional and religious affiliations of the pilgrims. Unsurprisingly, the large numbers of pilgrims coming to Sri Pāda are predominantly Buddhists and this further indicates the emergence of Buddhist characteristics of the postcolonial Sri Pāda.

COMPETING DISCOURSES

Chapter 2: Patrons of the Temple of the Sacred Footprint: Kings, Monks and Pre-colonial States

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the relations between the kings, monks, and the temple during 'pre-colonial' histories to assess the impact of the changes that occurred after the temple was 'politically recognised' by the pre-colonial 'Buddhist' states. I closely examine both the connections and continuities and the breaks and shifts between the different 'centres of powers', which politically recognised Sri Pāda as a centre of worship from the early part of the 12th century. As Nissan and Stirrat point out, in pre-colonial states ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences were not used as the basis for inclusion or exclusion from the polity. At various times groups would speak alternative languages, adhere to alternative religions and claim alternative identities (1990: 26). As Tambiah, Anderson and Stein show, the pre-modern states of South and Southeast Asia, despite variations in detail, emerge as relatively loosely structured organizations built upon the bases of heterogeneity, relativity, and graduality, and on the ideal of the delegation of power from the centre (cf. *ibid*: 24). This S. J. Tambiah describes as a 'Galactic Polity' (1976, 1985) and Burton Stein formulates as a 'segmentary state' (1980). In my view, such differences were evidently tolerated at the pre-colonial Sri Pāda, which had been continuously patronized by the pre-colonial states. Though Buddhist monks had controlled the Sri Pāda temple and Buddhist kings lavishly patronised it, alternative religious belief and practices were never excluded from pre-colonial Sri Pāda. Instead, they were accommodated and recognised.

The relationship between the king and the temple, as many anthropologists who study mainly South Indian temples (e.g., Appadurai 1981, Fuller 1984, 2003, Good 1987, 2004) explain, was always linked with the expansion of royal hegemony over people. According to them the king's hegemony was displayed and regenerated through his sponsorship of major rituals and gift giving to the priests and regional

subordinates, and through state administrative apparatus. As Appadurai puts it, widespread relationships of Hindu kings to South Indian temples implied a continuous dependence of the sovereignty of human rulers on their transactions with the paradigmatic sovereigns enshrined in temples (1981: 214). The relationship between king and temple seems to have been generally the case in Sri Lanka as well. For example, H. L. Seneviratne (1978) has shown that in the Kandyan kingdom, state ritual demonstrated a similar relationship although, in Kandy, this relationship linked a divine king and a sovereign paradigm of the Buddha. Winslow (1984) has similarly shown in the Kandyan state the gods could also have served as paradigms. And Obeyesekere has even suggested that the hierarchical model of the pantheon and of the political order of the Kandyan state has the power of incorporating (1963, 1966) outlying regions into the centralised polity. In this chapter, as far as Sri Pāda temple is concerned, the nature of the relationship between king and temple is not only explained in relation to the Kandyan state, but also to other previous centres of power too. So, I want to discuss the significance of the 'politically recognised' Sri Pāda temple in relationship to the different 'centres of pre-colonial power', which had the quality of accommodating diverse identities at large within segmentary or incorporated political situations in the pre-colonial states. The transactional and redistributive relationship between the king and the temple helped the king to publicly legitimise his hegemony not only over the temple areas (forested Malayarata and Sabaragamuva) but also the areas beyond the temple (trade-based Mayarata or south-western coastal areas). The king exercised his authority over temples as well as their surrounding regions by controlling and maintaining the temples' administration and ritual order. The way in which they ordered and re-ordered Sri Pāda temple's administration and ritual order in different 'regimes of power' is the central theme of this chapter and similarly, such projects of ordering Sri Pāda temple affairs in the colonial and postcolonial powers will be discussed in the subsequent chapters. Let me start my inquiry by exploring the historical juncture of the emerging of Sri Pāda temple as a pilgrimage site of (pre-colonial) state recognition.

2.2 Sri Pāda Temple as a site of Royal recognition

The cult of worshipping the footprint in Buddhist societies in South and South-east Asia is undoubtedly an ancient religious practice. However, there is no definite historical evidence about exactly when the cult was popularised in the Buddhist cultural regions. In the case of Sri Lanka some argue that the worship of the footprint can be traced back to the 2nd century BCE, but the site of worship was historically not the exact place where present worship takes place (Sri Pāda) (Ranavalla 1965: 187-219). Ranavella argues that the present pilgrimage site (Sri Pāda) of footprint worshipping emerged around the 10th century CE. There is good reason to accept his argument because, after the 5th century Mahavamsa documentation, of the Buddha's mythical engagement with Sri Pāda (see Appendix I), it is hard to find textual or archaeological information on any significant human engagement at Sri Pāda before the 10th century. As Paranavitana puts it 'It is in the reign of Vijayabahu I [1055-1110], we have the earliest historical evidence in the chronicles and in inscriptions for the cult of the Footprint on Adam's peak' (1958: 12). I want to make clear that this particular historical moment marked, as I will explain later, the beginning of the state or king taking seriously (or "politically recognizing") Sri Pāda affairs in their court agendas. In other words, the institutionalisation of footprint worship under the Buddhist states began, I would argue, only after the early 12th century¹⁴. One could argue that superficially there was no kind of a state link in place prior to that historical moment. As a preamble to that, let me sketch out the geographical and political formations of ancient civilization on the island, in which Sri Pāda emerged as a state-recognised centre of worship, or more precisely pilgrimage. I am sure, it will at least in part answer the above question.

In classical times the three major divisions of monarchical power were constituted as Rajarata or Pihiti rata, the centre of civilization in the North Central Province; Ruhuna, in the very south, which was extended at times to the Kalu Ganga (river) in the Western Province; Mayarata, which constituted much of the modern Western Province. The fourth region, Malayarata, was forested and desolate hill country and

¹⁴ R.A.L.H. Gunawardena says that evidently this shrine (Sri Pāda) was known and revered even at the time when the Mahavamsa was written (1979: 233). This may be true, but in my view until early 12th century Sri Pāda was not a sacred site recognised by the state.

was practically ignored in ancient classification. Basically, Sri Pāda was located in the South-western part of the forested Malayarata and present part of Sabaragamuva of the Mayarata¹⁵. Neither the Malayarata or the Mayarata civilizations were as important as Ruhuna and the Rajarata. Mainly, because of their geographical formations: Malayarata was forested and hilly while in the Mayarata excessive rainfall did not permit the development of a hydraulic civilizational model like that of Ruhuna and Rajarata. Geographical factors also perhaps account for the virtual absence of monumental archaeological remains. According to the Mahavamsa, Malayarata was still a wilderness in the 12th century. It was difficult to penetrate owing to the mountains and danger from wild animals and was shut off from intercourse with other men, being traversed only by footpaths. Hence, under these conditions Sri Pāda was not a popular pilgrimage site during either of the two classical civilizations, particularly Rajarata, until the regime of Vijayabahu I of Polonnaruwa was established in the 12th century. However, this does not mean that prior to this there had been no 'pilgrimage' at Sri Pāda. Perhaps, initially, this mountain might have been a religious site for the Vāddā [hunters], a group of indigenous people. Because, Sri Pāda was situated in the middle of the Vāddā's country, Sapara (vāddā) + Gamuva (the province of the hunters).

Moreover, the Mahavamsa, the Buddhist chronicle, also confirmed this region as the country of the Vāddā, since the days of the first father of the Sinhala group, Prince Vijaya, in the 6th century BCE. Vijaya initially married a demoness named Kuveni but later rejected her to marry a Tamil princess from South India. From this legitimate union sprung the Sinhala people. Vijaya's two children with Kuvani fled the area after her death: 'fleeing with speed they went thence to the Samantakuta (Sri Pāda). When he grew up, the son, the elder of the two children, took his own sister for his wife, and multiplied with sons and daughters' (Mv.vii 67). They dwelt in the surroundings of Samantakuta; since then this area has become the settlement of the Vāddā and so is now called "Sabaragamuva". Moreover, they were in the territory of the god Saman, who was according to Mahavamsa "resided in the Samantakuta"

¹⁵It has been asserted in some historical accounts that Sri Pāda fell under the jurisdiction of the kingdom of "Ruhunu Rata". But it is hard to find historical or archaeological material to prove such connections.

(ibid.). This account from the Mahavamsa perhaps also accounted for a piece of folklore that I have gathered from this region. In a story, the footprint of the Buddha on the mountain (*Samanala*) was discovered by the Vāddā, known as *malvatu* Vāddā (Vāddā of the flower garden). Similarly, the 15th century poetry called *Parevi Sandēsaya* refers to daughters of Vāddās in the area below Samanala (Sri Pāda), in Sabaragamuva.

According to Obeyesekere (2002) Vāddās claimed that the deity Saman was one of their ancestors before he foolishly invited the Buddha to the Vāddā's country (*vādi rata*). Also, Bambura Yaka of the Vāddās of the Seligman's day (1911) was traditionally propitiated in the Sabaragamuva Province. Obeyesekere explains Bambura was adopted by the Sinhala in Sabaragamuva and Western provinces for one very good reason: hunting. For him, some practice hunting as a way of life, some use it to supplement rice cultivation (1984:305-306). This habit according to Obeyesekere began to change when a monastery or temple was established in a village and the people become more Buddhist, although individuals continue to hunt everywhere in Buddhist Sri Lanka (ibid.). In the fifteenth century Buddhism was firmly established in this region, particularly in the coastal areas, and also in parts of the interior. This would *ipso facto* have produced a change in hunting as a general pattern of life in many areas under Buddhist influence. Even had hunting existed, it would have inevitably been culturally devalued (ibid.). If Sri Pāda were a site of Vāddā's worship, as Obeyesekere (2002) explains quite reasonably, the movement from Vāddā to Buddhist (which parallels the movement from hunting to agriculture) would probably lead us to conclude that Sri Pāda was a site of Buddhist worship in the first place.

If this is the case we can speculate that the site of Vāddā worship might have been transformed into a site of Buddhist worship by the emerging Buddhist state. It is probable, then, that Sri Pāda was a popular sacred destination for Buddhist pilgrims prior to the 12th century. As early as the 10th century, according to Iban Batutta, the first Muslim (Arabic) pilgrim, Soleyman had visited the site. But regardless of who worshipped at or occupied Sri Pāda before the 12th century, my argument is that Sri Pāda was "politically recognized" as an important site of Buddhist pilgrimage only

after the 11th century. Before then it was neither ‘politically’ or religiously recognized as an important site for the royal courts in the earliest centre of Sinhala Buddhist classical civilization in Anuradhapura. However, Sri Pāda was on the royal agenda of the Polonnaruwa royal courts, which were established after the collapse of Anuradhapura at the end of 10th century, but Sri Pāda remained important and its popularity continued to increase after the great hydraulic networks of the dry zone, based in Polonnaruwa, collapsed under the attacks of South Indian invaders, particularly Magha of Kalinga in 1214. Thus, the thirteenth century saw the centres of political power move south-west, first to Dambadeniya, then Yapahuva, then Gampola, and finally to Kotte in the Western Province and Kandy in the Central Province. Each of these “centres of power” that emerged on the periphery of the “hydraulic” Rajarata civilization took Sri Pāda affairs seriously in their royal court agendas.

2.3 Emergence of Sri Pāda as a site of monarchic politics

Why did Sri Pāda become a “politically” important and religiously ‘popular’ site for Buddhist as well as non-Buddhist communities on the island just after the 11th century or even before? My argument here is that the emergence of Sri Pāda as an important and popular pilgrimage site probably occurred after the Mayarata [consisting of the present-day Western Province, parts of Sabaragamuwa, and the North-Western Province] became prominent through foreign trade, particularly the rise of Indian maritime trading. In other words, as we shall see, Sri Pāda had become a politically recognised religious site after the establishment of a centre of power, which flourished largely on the surplus of the trade-based economies in the Mayarata civilization. Part of this argument is inspired by Gananath Obeyesekere, who argues against both ‘positivist’ and ‘nationalist’ readings or understandings of Sri Lankan history.

Obeyesekere points out that Sri Lankan historians¹⁶ have been firmly of the opinion that the abandonment of the Rajarata-centred northern dry zone civilization due to the invasion of South Indian rulers eventually led to a real discontinuation of the

¹⁶ I think their work has to be understood as a product of the “oriental positivist historiography” about Sri Lanka.

Sinhala civilization. Obeyesekere strongly argues against this premise. He shows that the major cause of decline of not only Rajarata but also Ruhuna hydraulic civilization was social motivations and economic imperative rather than migration to the southwest. He further argues that

The collapse of the northern dry zone civilization after Magha was at best a necessary condition for the abandonment of Rajarata, but it was not a sufficient one. There is no doubt that the invasion of Magha was socially disastrous and demoralizing for the Sinhala, but the viability of the civilizations that were established later in the south and west indicates that the kings could have staged a comeback had they wanted to do so. But there was a lure that prevented them and impelled them to the western coast—trade (1984: 8).

Also he shows that by the thirteenth century the ports of the Western and Southern provinces [from Waligama in the southeast to Colombo, and perhaps even further north to Chilaw and Kalpitiya] had come into prominence, particularly with the advent of trade with the Arabs. Control of this lucrative source of income produced a movement to the Wet Zone from both directions, from Rajarata as well as Ruhuna (*ibid*). Obeyesekere concludes his argument by emphasising that ‘the movement southwest after the thirteenth century did not imply any real discontinuity in Sinhala civilization, as many historians claim. It simply meant that the Mayarata took on a new prominence: after the thirteenth century the capital of the Sinhala kings was established there, and it was there that the Sinhala Buddhist civilization continued to flourish’. But Obeyesekere recognizes the Kandyan civilization as not old, continuing tradition; for him ‘it was a relatively new phenomenon with a heavy overlay of later South Indian influence’ (1984: 8-9).

I have located my argument in this ‘transformation’ but at the same time I do not totalise pre-colonial socio-cultural formations when I explain how Sri Pāda became a ‘politically’ important and ‘religiously’ popular pilgrimage site in the new economic conditions of the Mayarata. It is my intention to show how a different Sri Pāda emerges under different power constituencies, which were primarily based on a newly-emerging trade economy. Similarly, Sri Pāda and its surrounding area became

a place not only of worship, but also of economic viability for foreign traders, particularly the Chinese, Persians, Arabs and South Indians. One possible reason for that would be a recognition of Sabaragamuva as a source of precious gems and spices. Before such recognition, a large part of Sabaragamuva probably consisted of isolated villages and tribal groups of Vāddās¹⁷. Obeyesekere says 'It is likely that in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and earlier, the Sabaragamuva area was populated with Vāddās, since it was generally isolated and forested. Even after Sinhala civilization was firmly established in the south and west much of this area was remote and inaccessible' (1984: 304).

Sri Pāda and Sabaragamuva without doubt emerged due to their importance in the trade-based Mayarata civilization. Arab Muslims, who were involved in active trade before the advent of the Portuguese, established a dominant economic position in port settlements in this region (Arasaratnam 1964) and later many of them migrated to the interior Kandyan Kingdom, where they engaged in bullock transport and a diverse range of other occupations (Dewaraja 1986). Interestingly, those Arab Muslim groups who settled on the coast as well as in the interior by and large maintained their ethnic and religious identity, distinct from their Sinhala neighbours (Obeyesekere 1984: 307-308). South Indian immigrant groups who settled in this region, however, lacked the uniform character of the Muslim settlements. There were different types of immigrants - soldiers, merchants, tribesmen, Buddhists, and Hindus, as well as other types of settlers, and later most of them were incorporated into the Sinhala social structure and converted to Sinhala Buddhists (ibid). For example, one late immigrant group, the Salāgama caste of the west coast, were weavers from South India, probably from the Malabar Coast, and many of them came in the Dutch period. Today most of them are Sinhala-speaking Buddhists. Similarly the major wave of Karava (fishermen) immigration to the west coast

¹⁷ There are still some village names referring to Vadda in Sabaragamuva such as Vaddagala (Vadda rock), Vadda Ela (Vadda canal) and Vadihena (Vadda hena). Bailey refers to place names in this area like Vadi pangu (Vadda share of land), Vadi kumbura (Vadda fields), and Vadivatta (Vadda gardens) (Seligmann and Seligmann 1911: 09) (cf. Obeyesekere 1984: 304).

occurred after the fifteenth century; today they are mostly Sinhala-speaking Buddhists or Catholics (see Roberts 1982).

In addition to that, the area was also subject to foreign and colonial influences beginning in 1505, the date of the Portuguese arrival. High population concentration, economic advancement, learning¹⁸ and religious revival activities occurred at this time. Kelaniya, with its temple, was obviously important even prior to the emerging Mayarata. Interestingly, however, Jonathan Walters, in his *The History of Kelaniya* shows that the rise of Kelaniya as an important religious site did not happen later than early medieval times: 'a complex web of associations with Kelaniya initiated in early medieval Sri Lanka and developed into the present' (1996: 14). In this regard Walters' argument sheds some light on my own argument because, generally, pilgrimage sites like Kelaniya had also emerged under the socio-political and economic conditions which were also relevant to Sri Pāda. While other religious sites such as Anuradhapura and Polonnaruwa remained, until they were discovered by the "archaeological project" of British Ceylon in the nineteenth century, Kelaniya and Sri Pāda continued to flourish as the main religious sites for the newly-emerged Mayarata civilization. Even today the majority of pilgrims visiting Sri Pāda come from the regions under the old Mayarata. Moreover, the geographical location of Sri Pāda made it visible to people who lived in most parts of the South-western coastal region of the old Mayarata. Its visibility even goes many miles beyond this region across the South-western seas from where it could be seen, like an unusual pinnacle landmark for the sea traders heading to South-western ports of the island. The rise of the trade-based South-western region attracted competing trading groups, whose numbers swelled in the medieval period, although there is evidence that these mercantile groups had had a strong influence since the 10th century (Codrington 1916). Such groups came either from the Middle Eastern or Far Eastern regions. In fact, groups from neighbouring South India, in my view, not only carried on trade with Sinhala kings but also brought their faiths, myths and practices and articulated them at sacred sites like Sri Pāda.

¹⁸ For example: The vast literary output of the Kotte (1410-1544) and Matara periods (1750-1850).

Let me explain now how Sri Pāda became a 'religiously' popular and "politically" important site for the different royal courts of the Mayarata civilization, which were heavily dependent on foreign trade. Each of the royal courts that came to prominence after Rajarata civilization took Sri Pāda as an important site of pilgrimage and made it a central religious site by not only spending and granting considerable wealth to those royal courts through their "restoration projects" but also by making pilgrimages themselves to Sri Pāda. Under each royal restoration project, the administration (including the appointment of monks to the temple management) and ritual structure of the temple were remade or recreated according to the interest of each royal court agenda. As the chief patron of Buddhism, the king watched over not only Buddhist temporalities, but also the monkhood itself. Whenever disputes occurred among monks, the king acted as the ultimate arbiter, as in lay disputes, and he maintained the internal discipline of the monkhood. Like Southeast Asian Buddhist kings, he acted as the guarantor of the social order and the source of prosperity (see Tambiah 1976).

2.4 Institutionalisation of Sri Pāda under King Vijayabahu I

According to the Mahavamsa and the remaining archaeological evidence, the recognition of Sri Pāda as a national sacred site of Buddhism did not occur later than the early 12th century. It was during the reign of King Vijayabahu I (1070-1110) in Polonnaruwa that Sri Pāda affairs first entered the royal court agenda. Before Vijayabahu came to power the island was a principality of the South Indian invaders from Cola. Then Vijayabahu was a chieftain of Ruhuna and successfully raised the standard of revolt against Cola, eventually establishing the Sinhala royal court in Polonnaruwa. But this was temporary. In 1214 Magha of Kalinga landed in Sri Lanka with a large army and destroyed the kingdom of Polonnaruwa. In this political turmoil the centre of the Sinhalas' political power moved towards the Southwestern region of the island and there the Mayarata civilization began.

Interestingly, prior to such political shifts, Sri Pāda began to emerge as a pilgrimage site of national importance under the Buddhist kings of Polonnaruwa. According to well-known medieval historian R. A. L. H. Gunawardana, pilgrimages to worship at the important shrines scattered over the island became a common practice in this

period (1979: 233). Significantly, following the capture of Polonnaruwa, Vijayabahu I himself left on a pilgrimage lasting three months (ibid). Unlike his predecessors, Vijayabahu took Sri Pāda seriously as a site of pilgrimage and constructed it for the first time as a sacred place of royal recognition. Under his patronage Sri Pāda temple was built and in order to maintain it several villages were also granted. Some of the hugely productive villages were directly granted for the benefit of Buddhist monks and the pilgrims who visited to the pilgrimage site. In addition, he made new pilgrimage paths, renovated the old ones and erected pilgrims' rests (*ambalama*) along the paths. Finally, he dedicated the temple and its property to the Buddhist monk community. This, Vijayabahu I's pioneering "ordering project" for Sri Pāda temple was vividly recorded in the great chronicle, *Mahavamsa*, and on the rock inscription kept by Vijayabahu himself to mark his pious activities at Sri Pāda.

According to his inscription¹⁹, he performed several meritorious acts at the sacred footprint (*padalasa*). Among them, he offered his own bejewelled crown to the sacred footprint, along with jewellery and precious gems; various canopies, flags, banners and different kinds of incense were also offered. Moreover, Vijayabahu instituted the maintenance of repairs, paintings and lighting of lamps at the temple; he constructed the lower terrace for pilgrims from the low caste groups (*adama jati*²⁰) visiting Sri Pāda temple. He also made a large protective wall around the temple with two gateways, fitted with locks and keys, leading to two different pilgrims' paths.

The inscription further explains how he made the arrangement to supply facilities to pilgrims who visited Sri Pāda temple. For example he opened up several food donating centres (*dansala*) at the pilgrims' resting places (*ambalam*) he had erected. More importantly, to ensure maintenance of the temple organization, he dedicated

¹⁹ This inscription is situated at one of the ten villages he had donated to Sri Pāda known as Ambagamuva.

²⁰ It is not clear what Vijayabahu I meant because the word "*Jati*" has different connotations, sometimes meaning "caste group", sometimes "national" (ethnic groups). However, I know that until recently the Rodiya people (an out caste group) were not allowed to enter the Udamaluwa (upper stair) of the Sri Pāda temple, but I did not see any such practice today. However, the chief deity priest of the shrine of God Saman told me that he has noticed that most of the people of this caste usually visit Sri Pāda at the end of the pilgrimage season.

ten hugely productive villages²¹ and declared them free from taxation. The money thus saved was to be spent on the pilgrims and the monks of Sri Pāda temple but employees of the Royal family, wayfarers, tramps, hauling labourers, bullock carters and offenders were not allowed to benefit from them. He assigned some of his council members to maintain and facilitate the services that he had inaugurated at Sri Pāda (EZ vol. ii 202-218).

Interestingly, the Mahavamsa also recorded Vijayabahu's pioneering project²² at Sri Pāda as follows:

With the wish that all the people who trod the difficult road to worship the footprint of the Sage (Buddha) on the Sumanakuta mountain might not become weary, he granted for the dispensing of gifts, the village called Gilimalaya²³ where there were rice fields and the like, and had rest-houses built on the road past Kadaligama [Kehelgamuwa] and on the path from the province of Huva [Uva] hither, granting villages to each of these and after having the words "In future kings shall not take possession of these" engraved on a stone pillar the Monarch set this up (Cv. 60. 64-67)²⁴.

In my view, taking control of Sri Pāda under the Buddhist state at this historical juncture was politically important because by this time most of the trading groups from the Middle East and the Far East had begun to establish a "spiritual connection" with Sri Pāda by claiming it as a place of their own worship (see **Appendix II**).

²¹ Namely Kehelgamuwa, Tiniyagala, Soragoda, Liyavala, Badulla, Udu-ho, Makulumula, Ambagamuva, Valigampola and Ulapana (EZ: vol. ii p217). Today none of these villages belong to Sri Pāda temple.

²² The chronicle devotes an entire chapter to a description of the work of the king for the welfare of the sangha and the laity. Restorations and fresh grants of villages to about twenty-one monasteries are mentioned in the chronicle (see Gunawardana 1979: 87-89).

²³ This village is situated about 15 km from Ratnapura along the road leading to Sri Pāda [Palabaddala]. Currently, the hereditary services provided by the villagers of Gilimalaya to Sri Pāda pilgrims have ceased.

²⁴ The land grant of Gilimalaya, which is mentioned in Cūlavamsa and substantiated in the stone pillar inscription of Gilimalaya (Paranavitana 1958:12) erected by Vijayabahu I parallel to the Ambagamuva inscription. However, because of decay of the inscription on the pillar the detail of the grant is hardly recorded. But Gunawardana records that this pillar inscription is a duplicate of the Ambagamuva inscription (1979: 233) though the names of the villages granted remain different.

Broadly speaking, Vijayabahu's Sri Pāda institutionalisation project marked the transition of the 'mythic' Sri Pāda into a site of actual pilgrimage. Interestingly, Sri Pāda continuously flourished under the patronage of the royal courts that had formed after the collapse of Polonnaruva royal court, in the trade-based Mayarata civilization. This continued until the whole island came under British occupancy in 1815. For approximately eight centuries Sri Pāda was continually transformed and (re) constructed in response to the changing socio-political and religious circumstances of pre-colonial state powers on the island.

2.5 The work of kings at Sri Pāda through the eyes of the "Historian of the State"

After the work of King Vijayabahu I, King Nissankamalla (1187-1196) took Sri Pāda affairs seriously in his court agenda. Nissankamalla, who had Kalinga (South Indian) ancestry, became a king of the Polonnaruva royal court long after the five kings of Vijayabahu I's lineage. Nissankamalla has now become one of the popular figures in Sinhala popular traditions²⁵. He is equally visible in the island's epigraphical and archaeological records too. In this way he left a large amount of epigraphical evidence of his pious work during his ten years of political power (Gunawardana 1979: 78). For example, the only inscriptional evidence so far found in close proximity to Sri Pāda temple has been identified as a work of Nissankamalla. This cave inscription was erected to mark his royal pilgrimage to Sri Pāda temple and to record the improvements he made to the path up the sacred mountain and the generous gifts he offered to the temple. This royal visit to Sri Pāda was also given prominence in his other inscriptional works particularly that of the vestibule wall of the *Heta-da-ge* of Polonnaruva (see EZ. II.173)²⁶. The chronicle *Cūlavamsa* also confirmed his engagement with Sri Pāda temple and it was noted that: '[W]ith the four-membered army the ruler [Nissankamalla] full of pious devotion, went forth to the Samantakuta [Sri Pāda] and performed there his devotions' (Ch. ii 128).

Nissankamalla was the last of the powerful kings who restored the wealth of Sri Pāda temple. Shortly after his death the Polonnaruva royal court was abandoned as a

²⁵ See Appendix I.

²⁶ According to Kirielle Nanavimala, Nissankamalla recorded his royal visit to Sri Pāda in the seven inscriptional works he to be found in different places on the island (see 1942 (2001): 29-32).

consequence of the second invasion of Tamil Cholas [Magha: 1215-1236] from South India. Thus the Sinhala centre of power moved further into the southwest region of the island where Sinhala kings (e.g. Vijayabahu III 1232-1236) later built a new royal capital in Dambadeniya. Dambadeniya was followed in succession by other power centres, of the same sort as emerged and later fell in the former outback. These were Yapahuwa, Panduvasnuvara, Kurunagala, Gampola, Kotte and Kandy.

2.5. i Sri Pāda under Dambadeniya Royal Court

Yet, Sri Pāda was significant in the royal agenda of Dambadeniya (1236-1302). The Dambadeniya court of Parakramabahu II (1236-1271) took a definite interest in rebuilding the Sri Pāda temple and the pilgrimage routes to it. Parakramabahu II assigned this challenging “restoration” project to one of his senior ministers, Devapatiraja. This whole project is incoherently reported in the chronicle Cūlavamsa. Here I shall paraphrase some of the main events of Parakramabahu’s Sri Pāda “restoration” project.

In the first place, Parakramabahu explained the situation at Sri Pāda to his senior minister, Devapatiraja, as follows:

[T]he road leading to the Sumana mountain [Sri Pāda] is at many places obstructed, (made) inaccessible and causes difficulties to the people of the eighteen provinces who make pilgrimage [thither] in order to accumulate blessing by venerating the footprint of the Buddha. You, [Devapatiraja] therefore make it accessible for them.²⁷

As part of Parakramabahu’s project, according to Cūlavamsa, pilgrimage paths leading to Sri Pāda were constructed, including bridges and pilgrims’ rests (*ambalama*), and at Sri Pāda two shrine houses (*mandapa*; dedicated to the footprint and the god Saman), a courtyard and a parapet wall were built. Having completed the (re) construction work, Devapatiraja had performed several rituals [offerings] at the temple for three days. One such ritual was the light offering ritual (*pahan pūjā*). Cūlavamsa records that event: ‘Devapatiraja himself placed a lamp on his head, on behalf of his king, which contained fragrant oil and then circumambulated thrice

²⁷ Cūlavamsa also reported that two other popular temples, “*Hatthavanagalla*” [Attanagalla] and “*Bhimatitthavihara*” [Bentota] were ‘restored’ during the Sri Pāda project.

around the sacred footprint shrine and offered them to the footprint²⁸. The Cūlavamsa details the amount of pious work done by Parakramabahu II by paying great attention to the “restoration” project at Sri Pāda temple. The most significant event of Parakramabahu’s project was the installation of an image of the god Saman, the guardian deity of Sri Pāda temple. This event was historically significant because it marked the beginning of the veneration of the god Saman along with the sacred footprint at Sri Pāda temple. In addition to the Saman shrine at Sri Pāda temple, Parakramabahu built the main shrine for the god Saman²⁹ in the neighbouring southern city of Ratnapura, the provincial capital of the present Sabaragamuwa province. Such a pious act clearly indicates that the institutionalisation of the cult of the god Saman grew in prominence at the time of the Dambadeniya royal court. This point is further confirmed by Ariyapala in his discussion of the literature of the 13th century, showing that the worship of Vishnu and Saman was very widespread by this time and even Siva too was popular, although his worship seems to have been associated with South Indian settlers and mercenaries rather than Sinhala Buddhists (1968: 184).

Parakramabahu’s religious activities in the Sri Pāda region are further revealed in the establishment of a new monastery for the forest-dwelling monks at Palabaddala³⁰, for whose benefit he granted the annual income of Sri Pāda temple³¹. After Vijayabahu I, the restoration work of Parakramabahu II seems to me to lead to a different kind of Sri Pāda. This makeover was not necessarily a physical project: the excessive production of knowledge of Sri Pāda paralleled the ritual and administrative (re) ordering of the Sri Pāda temple in this period. The historical moment of Dambadeniya was marked by a magnificent literary output in both Sinhala and Pali

²⁸ Cūlavamsa 86: 9-36.

²⁹ The establishment of the main Saman shrine at the time of the Dambadeniya royal court in Ratnapura was recorded in two different historical sources: namely ‘sannasa inscribed on stone’ (*gal sannasa*), which describes the reconstructional work on the Shrine and the villages that were re-granted by Parakramabahu VI in the capital city of Kotte (see Bell 1916: 36-46). The other source is ‘Saman Siritha’ which states that the Shrine was built by Parakramabahu II, in fulfilment of a vow he had made to the god Saman for helping him to find precious gems in the region.

³⁰ Pujavaliya 805p

³¹ *Asgiri upatha* by Tubulle Selakkanda, 2000: 17.

which included numerous works devoted to Parakramabahu II: unsurprisingly Sri Pāda was extensively represented among them. For example, the Pali poetic masterpiece *Samantakutavannana* (the Praises of Mount Saman), written by a monk of the Palabaddala forest-dwelling monastery, was composed under the patronage of the Dambadeniya royal court. Similarly, *Pūjāvaliya* (written in the local vernacular language of Sinhala in the same period) gives a detailed account of the establishment of the footprint and highly praises the restoration work of Parakramabahu II. It is clear that both literary and 'restoration' projects of kings (particularly Parakramabahu II) show the growing popularity and importance of Sri Pāda at that historical juncture³². The Dambadeniya royal court seemed to constitute Sri Pāda as a central place in their new political landscape and built up the place with buildings, roads, monastery, shrines, artefacts and a range of literal and mythological associations. Hence, it is fair to accept that by the end of the Dambadeniya royal court, Sri Pāda had become a great pilgrimage site of the rising South Western [Mayarata] civilization of the island. In that civilization, with the exception of Kelaniya, Sri Pāda remains the only centrally important sacred site, having been visited by Buddha himself. So the new royal courts, established on the South Western littoral, constructed Sri Pāda as the main spiritual centre of those kingdoms. During the next three centuries, Sri Pāda continued to be a popular centre of pilgrimage, which attracted more pilgrims of various ethno-religious groups, immigrant groups from South India and other foreign nationals, particularly traders who were pursuing Indian maritime trading. The emergence on Sri Pāda of voluminous accounts of voyages is further indicative of their presence at Sri Pāda. For example, an Arabic scholar, Ibn Batutta, who ascended Sri Pāda in 1344, left an interesting record of his experiences on the Sri Pāda pilgrimage (see **Appendix II**).

We find less information about Sri Pāda during the Kurunagala royal court. However, we do know that under Parakramabahu IV a faction of monks

³² According to Godakumbura this period marked the beginning of a growing concern with preaching and writing in Sinhala rather than in Pali (1955: 56-66, 81-97). Berkwitz (2004) suggests that vamsa like Sinhala Thupavamsa appears to have been used as a paradigm for representing the history of other relics in Sinhala by late medieval time. The use of Sinhala as a public and literary language, for Hallisey, sheds light on the political history of medieval Sri Lanka and it allows both participation in and separateness from the cultural-political world articulated in Sanskrit (2003: 698-699)

(*vidarshanadura*) from the Asgiriya fraternity³³ was allowed to control Sri Pāda's income but that until then the Sri Pāda temple was controlled by a different faction of monks (*granthadura*) of Palabaddala monastery from the same fraternity. Until the temple was handed over to a group of Hindu priests by the king of Sitavaka, Rajasinha I, in the late sixteenth century, the temple was controlled by monks of the Asgiriya fraternity.

2.5. ii Gampola Royal Court (1346-1353)

Meanwhile, the capital city gradually shifted away from Dambadeniya and Kurunagala to the more secure hill country site of Gampola city. This meant that the royal court was not far from Sri Pāda temple. The Gampola kings took Sri Pāda temple affairs seriously in their court agendas though the court's duration was shorter than its predecessor's. Among these kings, Wickramabahu (1346-1353), the founder of the Gampola royal court, was exceptional. Wickramabahu allocated some royal funds for repairing of bridges and making seven hundred and eighty stone steps along the pilgrim's path that connected his royal capital to Sri Pāda temple. He also visited Sri Pāda as the ruler of the region and at the temple he performed several meritorious works. The most noticeable was donating a huge brass lamp, which was said to contain one hundred pots of oil. He himself lit it as a bonfire and wanted to make his works visible to the world³⁴. This ritual seems to have been uncommon at Sri Pāda prior to this period but subsequently it has been continually practised at Sri Pāda temple, albeit on a smaller scale. It continues to be known as the "Lamp of Twelfth months" (*Dolos Mahe Pahana*). This ritual practice is the most important addition made to the religiosity of Sri Pāda temple under the Gampola royal court.

2.5. iii Sri Pāda under the Kotte Royal Court

By the 1350s Gampola was challenged by a family of traders from Kerala in South India who controlled the Southwest region of the island from a base at Rayigama.

³³ Selakkandha (2000: 14 & 17-18).

³⁴ Rajaratnakari, 131-132.

The chief of this ruling family was known as Alakesvara (Alagakkonara). In the 1360s Alakesvara built the strong fortress of Sri Jayawardenapura Kotte (10 km to the south of the present capital city of Colombo), which grew steadily into a more powerful political and economic base than Gampola. But in 1414 a member of the Gampola royal court took the throne in Kotte, reunited the island and ruled as Parakramabahu VI until his death in 1466. Surprisingly, there is no record of Parakramabahu's engagement in Sri Pāda affairs. Though he did not pay much attention to Sri Pāda, he did pay keen interest in the "restoration"³⁵ of the main shrine of the guardian god of Sri Pāda [Saman] in Ratnapura, the capital city of today's Sabaragamuva province.

Interestingly, moreover, the reign of Parakramabahu VI made possible a kind of poetic production, mostly consisting of poems sharing a single format known as "message poems" or *sandesa kavi*. According to some message poems, one such place that messengers have to pass is Sri Pāda. For example, in *Sālahihini Sandēsaya* ("Dove's Message"), written in 1462 by a poetic monk of Totagamuva, SriRāhula, the beautification of Sri Pāda is described:

Turn eastward now you see the peak of Samanala,
Where Buddha's footprint (like a lotus) is venerated,
By great god Saman and goddess in offerings,
Of *Parasat* and *Mandar* flowers (my translation).

But unlike Kelaniya temple, Sri Pāda was not the favourite destination in the message poems of the Kotte period,³⁶ in which messengers stop, rest and make a

³⁵ For a detailed account of the restoration work; see, 'Maha Saman Devāle and its Sannasa' by H.C.P. Bell (1913). One point is worthy of mention here: all the restoration work was carried out under the guidance of the Tamil Hindu Brahmin of the royal court of Parakramabahu VI, Nila Perumal, who later became the chief custodian of the Shrine.

³⁶ However there are two message poems composed directly on Sri Pāda more precisely to the guardian god of the temple, the god Saman. The first, "message poems of cock" (*Sāule sandēshaya*) was written at the end of Kotte period and the second, entitled "*Kātakiril*", was composed in the Kandyan period. The former was written in the reign of Sitavaka Rajasinha (1581-1593) by the poet Alagiyawanna Mukaweti as an appeal (*āyāchana*) to the god Saman to protect the *Sasana* of the Buddha and the kingdom of Sitavaka. The latter was composed by an unknown poet during the reign of Rajadhirajasingha in Kandy.

special appeal to popular deities, like Vibhishana at Kelaniya³⁷. The message poems give us the routes taken by the bird messengers. These routes were not as the crow flies but were well-known land routes and roads. The implication is clear: the whole region was connected by land routes, and the geography of the area [kingdom] was thoroughly familiar to the message poets. All the central shrines of the gods in this region were accessible. Moreover, the message poems refer to large monastic schools and temples in this area, for example at Keragala, Kelaniya, Rayigama, Bentota and Totagamuwa.

In addition to message poems, we find some reference to Sri Pāda in a different kind of poetic creation which emerged in the Kotte period. This kind of poem was basically composed to praise the lives and the work of kings (*prasasti kaviya*) in the Kotte royal court. One such poem was entitled “*Pārakumbasirita*”³⁸, (the life of king Parakramabahu) and composed by the popular poetic monk, SiriRāhula of Totagamuwa. No matter how Rāhula praises the king Pārakramabahu VI, the fascinating information Rāhula conveys through this poetic creation is the common engagement of Hindu priests (*Brahmans*) in Sri Pāda pilgrimage by this time:

O tell me, traveller [Brahman, Hindu priest],

Where do you come from? Must be from Samanala [Sri Pāda].

Brahman! [*bamuna*] tell me the situation of the Samanala where God Saman is resided.

When two thousand five hundred years shall have elapsed,

There would come a king, the chief of the world- then people of the three regions (*tun vāsī*) [of the island] would say; that is

King Pārakum of this day³⁹

Sri Pāda was referred to in almost all the message poems and other poetic literature composed in this period. So we see through the work of poets how Sri Pāda continuously flourished in the royal court agendas of the Kotte kingdom.

³⁷ Jonathan Walters 1996: 48-60.

³⁸ See Charles de Silva's edition of *Pārakumba Sirita* (Colombo, 1953).

³⁹ My translation.

2.5. iv A Buddhist King Sponsoring a Tamil Hindu Priest

By the third quarter of the sixteenth century the Kingdom of Kotte had split apart. As a result, Sri Pāda came under the authority of Rājāsinha I (1581-1593) whose royal court was established in Sitavaka. Unlike Gampola the newly established royal court was located not far from the Sri Pāda temple but towards the western side of Sri Pāda mountain in the Kelaniya river valley. Ironically, Rājāsinha became a convert to Hindu Saivism, drove out the Buddhist monks in charge of Sri Pāda and placed it under the control of Hindu priests known as “*āndiyas*”. The conversion of Rājāsinha I from Buddhism to Hinduism, the Cūlavamsa narrates, was an event which caused a blow to Buddhism on the island⁴⁰. Surprisingly, the Cūlavamsa does not mention the series of pious works that he had carried out for the protection of Buddhism from the Portuguese who were at that time powerfully in control of the maritime regions of the island. The most notable pious work included granting a large number of villages to the main shrine of the god Saman in Ratnapura, bringing the most important relic - the Buddha’s tooth - to this shrine as a protective measure and beginning to hold the annual procession to honour it. In addition to that, Rājāsinha I planted the four saplings of the sacred Bo tree [*Sri Maha Bodhi*] at the premises of the Saman shrine that had been brought from Anuradhapura⁴¹. As well as these pious works, Rājāsinha I had like former kings shown his heroic ability, defeating the Portuguese for the first time during his relatively short [eleven-year] reign at Sitavaka. In 1593, Rājāsinha I of Sitavaka died and his extensive kingdom broke up. Some of it was annexed by the Portuguese and the rest by the king of Kandy. After this the king of Kandy became the sole heir to the Sinhala kingship.

After Rājāsinha I the Sri Pāda temple remained under the control of the South Indian Tamil Hindu priests (*āndiyas*) for many years. However, little detailed sociological

⁴⁰ Cūlavamsa reports Rajasinha as ‘the great fool, even slew his own father and brought the royal dignity into his power, [...].He annihilated the Order of the Victor [Buddhism], slew the community of the bhikkhus [monks], burned the sacred books, destroyed the monasteries...He placed miscreant ascetics of false faith on the Sumanakuta [Sri Pāda] to take for themselves all the profit accruing there from. In this way the impious fool, as he did not know what he should accept and what he should not have accepted, brought great evil upon himself (Cv 93: 4-13). But this particular image of Rajasinha of Sitavaka does not enjoy the same credence in the Sabaragamuva area (see Roberts 2002: 29).

⁴¹ Kirielle Ñānavimala 1946 [2000]: 45-46.

information is available on *āndiyas*. At any rate they came from the South Indian non-Brahman Saivite castes of priests. But Dewaraja reports that they were drawn from all castes, except Brahmin and *vellala*, and attached to the Siva temples of South India (1972: 49). Thurston notes that some *āndiyas* come from subdivisions of the *Pantaram*⁴² but others do not. During the reign of Rājasinha I, a large number of *āndiyas* settled in the Hevahata area⁴³ in the Kandyan region and one of his chief advisors in the royal court was an *āndiya* chief priest known as *Arittaki Vendu Perumal*, alias Mannamperuma Mohotti, who served the successors of Rājasinha I as a military officer during the late sixteenth century⁴⁴. In 1586, Rājasinha I also gave the village Gonadeniya, in the Atakalan korale of Sabaragamuva to an *āndiya* priest and his family⁴⁵. Place names like Andiambalama (“the resting place for *āndiya*”) and the famous pilgrim’s resting place at Sri Pāda known as *āndiya mala tānna* (“the place of *āndiya* death”) clearly indicate that *āndiyas* were present not only at Sri Pāda but also in other parts of the island too. According to the selective census carried out on 27th January 1824 there were 116 *āndiyas* and *pandarams* living in Colombo District (Census 1827: SLNA). Similarly, Obeyesekere and Gombrich reported that Kataragama was one such place where *āndiyas* lived and that they were wandering mendicant devotees of Murugan (1988: 179). What is certain is that the *āndiyas* at Sri Pāda were not strong adherents of Murugan but rather devotees of Siva. Interestingly, what happened at Sri Pāda under the jurisdiction of Sitavaka Rājasinha was the transferral of the administrative power that had been enjoyed by the Buddhist monks to the Hindu priests or *āndiyas*. We know little about how the *āndiyas* controlled and managed Sri Pāda affairs for the more than one hundred and fifty years of their presence at Sri Pāda.

⁴² See Thurston, *Caste and Tribes* p.48.

⁴³ Rājasinha I settled seven *āndiya* chiefs in seven different places on the island; the powerful *giri āndiya*, for example, was settled in Mandarapura (Mp: 62-65)

⁴⁴ *Rajavaliya* 1954: 80-82

⁴⁵ Dewaraja 1972: 49.



2.5.v Patronage of Kandyan Kings

However, control of Sri Pāda temple affairs did not rest peacefully in the hands of the Hindu āndiyas. Soon after the collapse of the Sitavaka royal court of Rājāsinha I in 1592, the last royal court of the island was established in the hill capital city of Kandy by Vimaladharmasuriya I (1592-1604); this lasted until it was captured by the British in 1815. Vimaladharmasuriya I took over the Sri Pāda temple from the Hindu āndiyas at least for a brief period and put it once more under the authority of the Buddhist monks. According to the “intermediate text” of *Mandāram pura puwata*⁴⁶ (“the story of the city of Mandaram”), which was written in Sinhala in the Kandyan period and dealt with military, social and economic matters of the kingdom that had been overlooked by “historians of state”, Vimaladharmasuriya I had chased out the āndiyas (*siva tausana*) from their seven strongholds, which included Sri Pāda⁴⁷. But it is not made clear whether he carried out any ‘restoration’ work at Sri Pāda temple or simply went on a royal pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. It is even hard to find two successive kings who engaged in the affairs of the Sri Pāda temple. Interestingly, one king among them, known as Senarat, who was Vimaladharmasuriya I’s immediate successor and who married a widow of his, had been a Buddhist monk at Sri Pāda Temple before he was crowned king of the Kandyan royal court (Raven-Hart, 1964: 135).

This indicates that the early rulers of the Kandyan kingdom, for about 100 years,⁴⁸ seem not to have taken Sri Pāda temple affairs especially seriously. One obvious reason would be the growing threat of external military pressure on the newly established Kandyan court, which initially came from the Portuguese. However, Robert Knox, a British marine captain who was imprisoned with his crew for a period of almost 20 years under the regime of Rājāsinha II (1635-1687) provides some fascinating information on this particular historical moment. Knox wrote his account after his escape and his account is widely used by anthropologists and other

⁴⁶ This poem was written in stages by different authors during the Kandyan period; the authorship of the third and the final sections is unknown. In 1958, this book was edited by Labugama Lankananda and that edition has recently been republished by the Ministry of Cultural affairs (1996).

⁴⁷ *Mandarm purapuvata* 1958 [1996]: 13-14.

⁴⁸ I see this historical moment as the most ‘loosely ordered’ or least ‘regularized’ in the affairs of Sri Pāda.

scholaṛs as a major source for the reconstruction of pre-colonial Kandyan society. He wrote about Sri Pāda in his account “An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon” published by the Royal Society at the Robe and Crown in St. Paul’s Church Yard in 1681, as follows:

[T] he mountain is at the south end of the country, called Hammalella [Samanala], but by Christian people, Adam’s peak, the height (highest?) in the whole island; where as has been said before, is the print of the Buddou’s [Buddha] foot, which he left on the top of that mountain in a rock, from whence he ascended to Heaven. Unto this footstep they give worship, light up lamps, and offer sacrifices, laying them upon it, as upon Altar. The benefit of the sacrifices that are offered here do belong unto *the moor’s pilgrims* [must be āndiya priest] who come over from the other coast to beg, this having been given them here to fore by a former king. So that at that season there are great numbers of them always waiting there to receive their accustomed fees (1681: 80-81).

Knox’s account, interestingly, depicts several important points about Sri Pāda affairs. Firstly, he indicates the belief of Christians in the sacred footprint as Adam is popular by this historical period. Secondly, he provides a glimpse of Buddhist worship at Sri Pāda temple and most importantly, he shows us how Hindu āndiya priests (although he misunderstands them as Muslims) controlled Sri Pāda temple at that time. If Knox is right, we can assume that the Hindu āndiya priests regained the power of controlling the temple revenue that they had lost to Buddhist monks as a consequence of the intervention of Vimaladharmasuriya I of the Kandyan royal court. Such contestations over the control of Sri Pāda temple revenues and ritual services were not uncommon in this period. However, as you will see in a moment, Buddhist monks were not entirely successful in this contest until the reign of the great Buddhist revivalist king, Kīrti Sri Rājasinghe (1747-1782), under whose authority the Hindu āndiya priests totally lost their power over Sri Pāda temple.

2.6 Sri Pāda Reordering Project of Kīrti Sri and Vālivita Saranamkara

The Kandyan royal court was established in the late 16th century but it did not become a flourishing place for “stronghold Buddhism” until the mid eighteenth

century. If the status of monks is to be taken into account, for well over a century there were rarely monks with higher ordination anywhere on the island. Thus, during the late sixteenth, seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the majority of monks on the island were identified with their peculiar lifestyle as “*ganinnanse*” or semi-monk⁴⁹. In this vague context, in the mid eighteenth century the reformulation of Buddhism began under the patronage of King Kīrti Sri Rājasinghe who was originally descended from the South Indian Nayakkar dynasty and later became one of the great kings of the Sri Lankan Buddhist tradition. Kīrti Sri fully realized the ideals of Buddhist kingship by determinedly patronizing and protecting Buddha’s religion because Buddhism was inseparable from the Kandyan state. Indeed, Kīrti Sri faced serious problems of legitimation during his reign (1747-1782) because his authority was threatened by the power of the Kandyan chiefs and monks (Seneviratne: 1976, 1978; Dewaraja (1972 [1988]; Dharmadasa (1976)[1997]; Gunawardana: 1990; Duncan: 1990; Holt: 1996 and Blackburn 2001).

Dharmadasa argues that Nayakkar kings became patrons of Buddhism, Sinhala literature and the arts so as to compensate for their marginality (1997: 79). He writes “It can reasonably be argued that in the eighteenth century, as in the centuries before, the Sinhalese intelligentsia nurtured a Sinhala Buddhist ideology and ...this ideology developed into a political instrument of special significance in the peculiar circumstances associated with the accession of Nayakkar kings” (1997: 94). Dewaraja’s classic analysis of Kandyan politics during the eighteenth century says that ‘the Nayakkar kings as we shall see maintained their position by perpetuating existing cleavages and factions among the nobles’ (1988: 91-92). The Nayakkar kings faced resistance and one well-known instance of such resistance was “the plot of 1760,” against Kīrti Sri. Dewaraja defensively writes ‘it is clear that this was no organized attempt by the Buddhists of the Kandyan kingdom to overthrow the Nayakkar domination. Only a few chiefs of consequence joined in it. The reason for this treachery seems to be a personal one...the bhikkhus of the Malvatta vihāra were in no way united against the king. One of the king’s informants who revealed the plot

⁴⁹ For a substantial detail of the character see Malalgoda 1976: 57-58.

was [another Malvatta monk] Hulamgamuve' (122-123). Anne Blackburn suggests that 'if accounts of Siyam Nikāya [monks] participation in the plot are correct, which seems quite likely, the event is a useful reminder of two things: the fissiparousness of elite politics in the Kandyan Kingdom, and the lack of distance between leading monks of the early Siyam Nikāya and the kingdom's political heavyweights' (2001: 34). However, both Senaviratne (1976) and Holt (1996) have read this "plot" somewhat differently and their argument is that the motive behind the plot was economic rather than political. Whatever the resistance against Kīrti Sri, it seems to have reconciled him with the Kandyan monks and done nothing to reverse his policy of being a lavish patron of Buddhism (see Malalgoda 1976). Hence, generally, my attempt here is to understand the overall religious project of Kīrti Sri in general and his "temple restoration project" in particular, with special attention to what I call his "Sri Pāda reordering project". All of his projects were remarkably legitimatised by the monk Vālivita Saranamkara⁵⁰ as his royal tutor (*rājaguru*) and the main advisor of his projects to propagate Buddhism.

One such project was the reestablishment of the higher ordination (*upasampada*) of Buddhist monks in Kandy (see Malalgoda 1976; Blackburn 2001). According to Malalgoda (1976) the Buddhist ordination tradition in Kandy was re-established from Thailand (Siam) in the second half of the eighteenth century, resulting in a strong and centralised fraternity of Buddhist monks, *Siyam Nikāya* under the authoritative leadership of Vālivita Saranamkara. He was actively involved in the establishment of the Siyam Nikāya as a new and influential monastic order under the royal patronage of Kīrti Sri. The role of Kīrti Sri was crucial to the formation and continued growth of the monastic community and its institutions in the island. Hence, apart from reintroducing monastic order Kīrti Sri issued a royally instituted

⁵⁰ Born in 1698, he belonged to an elite family of a descendant of Kulatunga Mudali who obtained high administrative rank during the reign of King Vimala Darma Suriya II (1687-1707) (Dewaraja 1988,104). Saranamkara received novitiate monastic ordination from a *ganinnanse* (semi-monk) named Suriyagoda. Also said to have studied under a layman (Lewke *ralahami*) and a novice monk (Pallekubure Attadassi). He gained a reputation as a serious scholarly monk, a reputation further enhanced by his appointment as the royal teacher (*rajaguru*) and the chief monk (*sangha raja*; lit. king of the monks) of the newly established monastic order or Siam Nikaya in 1753, a position he held until he died in 1778 (see Blackburn 2001 chap. 2 & 3, Malalgoda 1976: 58-69).

program of disciplinary reform, *katikavata*, or code of regulation for monks, creating newly consecrated monastic *simās* (purified monastic sacred space) and established monastic schools (*pirivenas*), supporting the preservation of literature⁵¹, translation, writing and public chanting (*bana* and *pirit*) in the form of Pali which was activated by spending large sums of royal wealth.

Most of these activities were concentrated around the monasteries of newly established Siyam Nikāya (formally beginning in 1753), which constituted two different administrative headquarters (*pārshava*), popularly known as the Malvatu Vihāraya (temple) and the Asgiriya Vihāraya⁵². All monks on the island were affiliated to one or other main establishment (Malvatta or Asgiriya) through ordination, and admission to either establishment was restricted to high-caste Goyigama⁵³. Each establishment had a parallel hierarchy of office bearers, which was headed by the Mahanāyaka (supreme chief monk or incumbent), who was assisted by two Anu Nāyakas (Deputy Supreme Chief Monks) and a Committee of Nāyaka (Chief Monks) selected from the main monasteries within each division (Malalgoda 1976: 67-68). Above all of them, Vālivita Saranamkara obtained the highest title of the Sangharaja⁵⁴ (lit. the king of monks), under whose guidance the religious and literary renaissance projects of Kīrti Sri were formulated. As I noted above, one such remarkable religious project patronised by Kīrti Sri was the “temple restoration” project.

⁵¹ The list of literary works produced during the Kīrti Sri reign is quite impressive (see Blackburn 2001: 213-216).

⁵² In terms of their origins, Asgiriya belonged to the forest-dwelling fraternity and Malvatta belonged to the village-dwelling. By the middle of the eighteenth century however this distinction had lost its original significance, as most of the Asgiriya monks too were in fact village-dwelling (cf. Malalgoda 1976: 67).

⁵³ The caste exclusion was not fully implemented in the first higher ordination ceremonies of 1753, where Sitinamaluve Dhammajoti, a member of the Durava caste of Southern province, was able to receive higher ordination (Malalgoda 1976: 91).

⁵⁴ After his death, this office became defunct.

Under this project, various important temples and educational institutions in outlying regions were renovated and their religious festivals were reintroduced. To ensure the function of those institutions, royal land was also granted. It is under this project, according to Malalgoda, that the more important pilgrimage sites in the island such as the *atamahasthāna* ["eight great sacred places"] at Anuradhapura, Sripadasthāna [samnola kanda], Kelaniya and Ridi Vihare, and monasteries in the South came under the control of the Malvatta establishment, while the monasteries at Polonnaruwa; and Mahiyangana, Mutiyangana [Badulla] and Dambulla came under the control of the Asgiriya establishment (1976: 68). Interestingly, Kīrti Sri's temple "restoration" project was not confined to the Kandyan geo-political territory but expanded to Buddhist institutions⁵⁵ under Dutch control in coastal regions of the island as well. Under this project, Kīrti Sri not only restored many Buddhist temples but also some major Hindu temples, such as Munneswaram on the West coast of the island (see Bastin 2002: 47–51). He also personally went on pilgrimage to some of the sacred sites that he had restored. These works of Kīrti Sri portrayed him as a dedicated and powerful participant in the life of the Buddhist *sāsana*.⁵⁶ In Malalgoda's words:

A substantial portion of the economic assets of the king went into the building and repair of Buddhist temples, and in donating lands (*vihāragam*) to temples the king lost a considerable amount of his personal revenue and services, as the donations were out of his own villages (*gabadāgam*). The donations, evidently, were not guided solely by religious considerations; they were part of the general process whereby the king exchanged his economic assets for non-economic debts, a process which has been clearly observed in the case of land grants (*nindagam*) to the king's administrators (1976: 65).

These activities of Kīrti Sri as a pious Buddhist king have been identified by John Holt (1996) and James Duncan (1990) as what they call the "Asokan discourse"⁵⁷.

⁵⁵ Particularly temples in the Southern coastal region of Matara (e.g., Mulkirigala Viharaya) and Kelaniya (see Walters 1996) near Colombo.

⁵⁶ Ann Blackburn (2001: 96–104).

⁵⁷ This discourse included a set of beliefs that defined a proper king as pious, righteous and devoted to the fostering of the Buddhist religion and to the welfare of the people (Duncan 1990: 5). They have

By thiṣ they mean a set of verbal and symbolic strategies through which Kīrti Sri identified himself and his actions with the figure of Asoka⁵⁸.

Most of Kīrti Sri's temple "restoration" works, which I outline above, can be reflected in relation to Sri Pāda temple. This specific project I would like to call the "Kīrti Sri – Saranamkara Sri Pāda reordering project". Because as you will see Saranamkara's engagement in this project was as important as the king's involvement. Kīrti Sri took the Sri Pāda "reordering" project seriously with the moral and advisory support of Saranamkara because for Kīrti Sri, Sri Pāda did not appear as just another temple to be renovated. It was an opportunity for him to show his genuine righteous Buddhist kingship, as previous kings had proved by patronizing and protecting the (order) "*sāsana*" of the Buddha, in the context of his dual identity (Hindu-Buddhist) which had been vigorously queried by a faction of the Buddhist Kandyan aristocracy.

Kīrti Sri began the Sri Pāda reordering project in the same year (1751) that he was crowned as the king of the Kandyan geo-political territory. The intention of the project was clearly visualized in the official village grant document to Sri Pāda temple in 1751. This village grant document is popularly known as "*kuttapitiya sannasa*". Let me quote some parts of the *sannasa* here:

(His Majesty) [Kīrti Sri] when residing at *Sriwardhana-pura* [Kandy] entitled *Senkhanda Sailabhidhana* [*senkadagala*] like *Surendra* (Sakra) ... had learnt that religious services were not performed constantly at *Samanta-kuta Parvata* (Adam's Peak), where the print of the Sacred Foot of Lord Buddha was impressed; and that in the time of His Majesty King Rājāsinha of Sitavaka it (the site) had come into the possession of *āndiya* (Fakirs) who smear their bodies with ashes, presaging their own complete cremation in the awful fiery furnace of Hell-in order to attain *Swarga* and *Nirvana*, on

also identified works of Kirti Sri through the discourses such as Sakran (Duncan 1990), Mahasammata, Manu and *bodhisatta* (Holt 1996).

⁵⁸ This is the most important model for kingship in Buddhist communities throughout Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia and was based on traditions that emerge around the Indian emperor Asoka or Dharmasoka who reigned in the third century BCE (see Tambiah 1976, Roberts 1994: 57-121)

“Wednesday, the 12th day of the waxing moon of (the lunar month) *Nikini*, and the 23rd day of (the solar month) *Kārkataka* (Cancer), in the two thousand two hundred and ninety fourth year, named *Prajapati*, of the Buddhist Era, donated the village called Kuttapitiya of 165 amunams in full sowing extent, together with 9 its appurtenant houses, gardens, plantations, high and low land, situated in the Navadun Korale of Sabaragamuwa District, until the *Sāsana* (Buddhist religion) becomes extinct, free of dispute by those great kings who obtain the sovereignty of the Island of Lanka in future, so as to ensure continuous maintenance for those who conduct the religious services at the sites; and ordained that the performance thereof be entrusted to pupillary successors [(*sisyanu sisya paramparāva*) of Vālivita Saranamkara Swami, who resides at the *Uposatharama* (Malwatte Vihare, Kandy), and is endowed with the magnificent qualities of *Silachari* (observance of ascetic rules) and virtuous conduct (Bell 1925: 11).

This *sannasa* of Kuttapitiya⁵⁹ clearly shows Kīrti Sri’s declaration⁶⁰ that Sri Pāda is a Buddhist pilgrimage site and eventually has to be controlled not by Hindu Saivite priests (*āndiyas*) but by the pupillary successors of Saranamkara. This seems publicly to repudiate any attempt that might be made to identify Kīrti Sri’s political and religious interests with those of the Tamils. This might explain why Kīrti Sri was so taken with the Sri Pāda reordering project immediately after his coronation, as a means of expressing his “Buddhistness”, which had been questioned by the Sinhala aristocrats in the Kandyan royal court. Moreover, his position is further revealed in the Cūlavamsa account of his Sri Pāda reordering project:

The wicked king known as Rājasinha in the kingdom of Sitavaka who had committed parricide and destroyed the order of the Buddha had adopted a false faith of Saivism and ordered the saivite priests [*āndiyas*] to take for

⁵⁹ According to P.E. Pieris, prior to this grant, the village of Kuttapitiya belonged to Mudaliyar Luiz Cabral de Faria and before him it had been controlled by Simão Pinhão, the Portuguese husband of Sitavaka Rajasinha’s daughter, Dona Maria Perera (1950: 102).

⁶⁰ Before this declaration, Kirielle Ñanavimala reports from a somewhat nationalist perspective, the monk Madagammana had controlled Sri Pāda, following a fourteen-month confrontation with Tamil (*demalun*) *andīya* priests. It is also reported that as recognition of that act, Kirti Sri appointed him custodian monk of Sri Pāda temple (2001: 22-23).

themselves the temple collection of the sacred footprint on the Sumanakuta. From that time believers of Saivism destroyed everything there [...] (Cv.100-223). Kīrti Sri commanded the āndiya priests to stop their religious practices at Sri Pāda temple and placed the temple under the authority of Buddhist monks, who were to carry out correctly the many Buddhist practices that should be performed at the temple⁶¹. He granted the flourishing, populous, extensive village of Kuttapitiya⁶² to the temple of the sacred footprint and he constructed a wooden shrine house to protect the footprint from sunlight, curtained it and adorned it with an umbrella, fixed it firmly with iron chains and accumulated much merit by performing several ritual acts at the temple (Cv.100: 220-227).

Kīrti Sri's clear public denial of Rājāsinha and Hinduism constitutes an identification with Buddhist Kingship. This act is further symbolically revealed in the offering of a pair of valuable elephant tusks to Sri Pāda temple which had originally been presented to Kīrti Sri by a group of Hindu Saivite āndiyas in their final attempt to secure the position at the pilgrimage site⁶³. Even though Hindu āndiyas lost control of the Sri Pāda temple, the ritual engagement of a Hindu priest at Sri Pāda did not cease completely until the mid-twentieth century (see chapter 4).

⁶¹ This account of Cūlavamsa confuses control of Sri Pāda temple by the āndiya priests at the time of Kīrti Sri (1747-1782) because an early account of Cūlavamsa stated that under the regime of Vimaladharmasuriya I (1592-1604) Sri Pāda was "restored" and transferred from the āndiya priests to the Buddhist monks. But there is no information on who actually controlled Sri Pāda after Vimaladharmasuriya I. However, in Knox's brief account on Sri Pāda gives some evidence that under the royal court of Rājāsinha II (1635-1687) Sri Pāda temple was controlled by āndiya priests (1681[1911]: 81). Thus, according to the Cūlavamsa account, āndiyas had undoubtedly controlled Sri Pāda temple before it was subject to the reordering project of Kīrti Sri- Saranamkara in the mid 18th century.

⁶² Under the reordering project of Kīrti Sri-Saranamkara, the villages were reassigned different tasks in the upkeep of Sri Pāda temple and at the same time to require to perform various services for the chief monk of the temple. These services and social positions were arranged under the hereditary caste formations of the Kandyan regions. Thus villages [in 1871 there were 186 families] of Kuttapitiya [*viharagama*] came under the direct authority of Sri Pāda chief monk. Today, this authority operates somewhat differently, but the services that they had performed have completely ceased.

⁶³ Kirielle Nanavimala (1975: 32).

Without doubt this overall 'reordering project' marked the emergence of a different Sri Pāda in the late pre-colonial moment, with a new Buddhist outlook. Some aspects of the project, such as taking temple management from the Hindu Saivite āndiya priests and appointing Buddhist monks as the custodians of Sri Pāda temple, the village grant for the maintenance of Sri Pāda affairs, the "restoration" of the temple with a Buddhist outlook and (re)commencing Buddhist rituals clearly demonstrate, as Malalgoda puts it, the consolidating power of Kīrti Sri, maintaining his public profile as a righteous Buddhist king while at the same time demonstrating his inclusiveness (1976: 66). The overall religious project under Kīrti Sri can be assumed in part to be an attempt to incorporate and unite the various areas of the Kandyan state, including Sabaragamuva, where the Sri Pāda temple is situated.

2.7 A Hindu King Sponsoring Buddhist Monks

As such, the Sri Pāda reordering project of Kīrti-Saranamkara symbolically represented how the controlling power of Sri Pāda temple affairs shifted from non-Buddhists, more precisely Hindu Saivite priests (*andiyas*), to the monks of the newly established Buddhist order in Kandy, more precisely those under the authority of Vālivita Saranamkara, one of the main architects of the Siam Nikāya. The authority vested in Saranamkara over the affairs of Sri Pāda temple was later assigned to one of his close pupils⁶⁴, Vehālle Dhammadinna, who belonged to the Malvatu Vihāraya fraternity of the Siam Nikāya and originally came from the Southern coastal area of Matara.⁶⁵ In addition to this appointment, Dhammadinna⁶⁶ (1679–1775) was also appointed chief monk for Sabaragamuwa and Matara Districts (*dedisava*) (Nanavimala 2001: 25). These positions were newly created as a part of the Kīrti Sri-

⁶⁴ A monk of Sabaragamuva, in a personal conversation, told me, before the Vehalle, monk Malimboda (Sr.) who was among the first group of higher ordination at Kandy had obtained the first post of Sri Pāda chief incumbency but many monks in Sabaragamuva do not concur.

⁶⁵ However, a monk who qualified to control such valuable pilgrimage sites did not necessarily come from the Saranamkara lineage but, as Blackburn has pointed out, whether or not monks were members of the Saranamkara pupillary lineage, implementation of the curriculum initiated by Saranamkara helped assure their legitimacy as part of the new order [*Siam Nikaya*] (2001: 62-63).

⁶⁶ For a detailed description of this monk and his pupillary lineage, see Kirielle Nanavimala 1975, *Vehalle Dhammadinna Sasana Itiyasaya*).

Saranaṃkara Sri Pāda re-ordering project. Interestingly, the appointment of Vehälle Dhammadinna marked the establishment of a new monastic title: “*Samanola gala vihāra padaviya*” (lit. the chief priest of the *samanola* rock temple). It later became the property of the pupillary lineage of Vehälle (*sangha-paramparāva*) in the province of Sabaragamuva⁶⁷. After the death of Vehälle his own pupils, namely Malimbada Dhammadhara and Kumburupitiye Gunaratana (-1780), who were also low-country pupils of Saranamkara, became the chief priest of Sri Pāda successively (Wimalavamsa 1997: 26-29). Such smooth transfer of administrative power over the Sri Pāda temple did not last many years: this system was challenged immediately after the demise of Saranamkara in 1778, largely through the influence of Moratota Dhammakandha (1735-1811), a Kandyan monk who, at this time, was the deputy chief of the Malvatta establishment (*anu nāyaka of Malvatta Vihāraya*) and the royal tutor (*rājaguru*) to Kīrti Sri’s successor, RājadhiRājasinha (Malalgoda 1976: 85). The controversies between Saranamkara’s pupils who resided both in Kandy and Sabaragamuva will be taken up in the next chapter. Though such disputes occurred some time after the Kīrti Sri-Saranamkara reordering project at Sri Pāda, control of the lucrative Sri Pāda temple remained with the monks of Siyam Nikāya (either under the Kandy or Sabaragamuva monk) who had been invested with them in the context of the above project. But, as we shall see in the next chapter, this control began to evaporate under new ‘legal-rational’ regime of the British occupying power, for a considerable period of time at least.

Conclusion

To conclude, in this chapter I have closely examined both the connections and continuities and the breaks and shifts between the different ‘centres of powers’ and the Sri Pāda temple in pre-colonial Sri Lanka, and particularly how different centres of power took Sri Pāda seriously and ordered or reordered its administrative and ritual structures, as demanded by each royal court agenda. Before that I argued that Sri Pāda became a nationally important pilgrimage site, in other words that it began

⁶⁷ The monk tradition (*sangha paramparava*) of Vehalle is not limited to Sabaragamuva. It also spread to the low country regions and later became a powerful tradition in those areas (See Ñānavimala K. 1976, Hewawasam, P.B.G 1966: 48-82).

to be recognized as a royal place of worship, with the advent of trade-based Mayarata civilization. Prior to that, as we have seen, it is hard to find any royal patronage or clear connection between the pre-colonial states and Sri Pāda temple. However, we see that the institutionalisation of Sri Pāda as a state-recognised pilgrimage site first became visible under the royal patronage of King Vijayabahu I of Polonnaruwa royal court, which was the last centre of power in the “Raja Rata civilization”. Since then, as I have explained, Sri Pāda was an important site for all the centres of power which emerged in the South-west [Mayarata] and central Kandyan regions [Malaya Rata] in pre-colonial Sri Lanka. Throughout this long temple history, different centres of power took Sri Pāda temple affairs seriously in their court agendas and put it under the control of Buddhist monks and, on some occasions, Hindu priests. Though, geographically speaking, Sri Pāda remained peripheral to those “centres of power”, it was never completely marginalized from them because, as I have explained, Sri Pāda came substantially under their influence through patronage projects such as temple restorations, village grants, the appointment of priests and the making of royal pilgrimages to Sri Pāda by kings themselves (as I will explain in the next two chapters, this picture is beginning to change in the (post)colonial polity of the country). Moreover, I have shown that the royal patronage projects at Sri Pāda further encouraged differing religiosity oriented towards Buddha or his sacred footprint and its guardian deity, Saman. The worship of the deity Saman was institutionalised around the 13th and 14th century by the construction of new shrines for him not only at Sri Pāda temple and at Ratnapura (the main shrine) but also in other parts of the island. My point is that these kinds of ‘royal’ connection with the sacred sites in general are not merely religious but also political and economic; through them the centre exercises its power over not only sacred sites but also regions and the people who live in them. In other words, royal ritual connection not only to Sri Pāda temple but also to other temples tied the segmentary state together. With the expansion of royal hegemony, and increasing administrative complexity, gift-giving patterns grew more elaborate and became the prime public expressions of sovereignty (Dirks, 1976: 145). That is why almost all the royal courts [kingdoms] that emerged after the 11th century for the most part took Sri Pāda temple affairs seriously in their court agendas.

Such situations are not uncommon in the pre-colonial polity of South Asia. For example, Stein shows South Indian Cola rulers maintaining ritual hegemony over local and supra-local assemblies of elites through contributions to ever more far-flung temples in the centre of ever more independent *nadus*; by means of strategic donations to important temples, appointment of outside 'chiefs' to positions of considerable authority over local regional segments during the Vijayanagara age (1983: 36). There is a long-standing debate in South Asian scholarship as regards the priority of kings over temples or temples over kings (see: Fuller 1988: 56-62). In Stein's view temples and kings 'shared sovereignty' that emerged from the relationship of temple and king and not one or the other's prerogative (1980). The complex politico-religious histories of pre-colonial Sri Pāda temple very much share this view⁶⁸. Most of the kingdoms, particularly the Kandyan Kingdom, had been more receptive to religious diversity though there had also been limits to that receptivity. As Malalgoda puts it, 'The Kandyan Kingdom had admitted Muslims driven away by the Portuguese and Roman Catholics driven away by the Dutch....the king held the view that different groups of people were entitled to have different religious belief and practices; and he was no promoter of conversions on behalf of one religion or another. This was more or less the standard policy of Kandyan kings. They themselves had to be Buddhist, but that did not mean that all their subjects had to be so too' (1997: 69-70). Such situations are not uncommon in the pre-colonial polity of South and South-east Asia. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, alternative religious beliefs and practices were not only tolerated but also generously accommodated along with the state religion. The case of Sri Pāda provides a classic example of receptivity to religious diversity in the pre-colonial states of the island. But as you will see in next chapter, such religious diversity was

⁶⁸ Appadurai (1981), Susan Bayly (1989) and recently Mark Whitaker (1999) have continued this view in their Hindu Temples studies. Susan Bayly in her massive work on Islam and Christianity in South India has shown that despite formal allegiance to different religious traditions, 'The sharing of ...themes and principles of worship transcended divisions of community or confessional attachment' (1989: 455). This she describes through 'circuits of mutual influence'. Whatever the case in south India, in Sri Lanka these 'circuit of mutual influence' have had a long history. As I have partly explained in this chapter Sri Pāda temple has for centuries been part of an international circuit, which includes Islamic, Christian, Hindu and Buddhist worlds than Bayly's interpretation of the South Indian material would allow.

contested instead of incorporated with the advent of colonial powers and later under the post-colonial state. Above all, this chapter is very much concerned with working out how different versions from different powers at different historical locations have constructed, reconstructed or ordered and reordered the temple of Sri Pāda under the country's specific political, economic and social conditions. In the next chapter I will explore how it was viewed in the colonial polity.

Chapter 3: The governance of Sri Pāda Temple under colonial governmentality

Governmentality also includes a growing body of knowledge that presents itself as “scientific,” and which contributes to the power of governmentality (Michel Foucault, “Governmentality”)

Governmentality should be understood as a power dispersed through the social body. [But] it cannot be regarded as a singular colonial strategy (Peter Pels 1997: 75).

Introduction

As far as Sri Pāda temple history is concerned, it has been a place of contestation, disputes, discrepancy and competition between different groups over its control. One of the main tasks here is to examine such disputes and discrepancies that arose over the governing of Sri Pāda temple under different hegemonic powers in which Sri Pāda temple had operated particularly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such exercise of power over the temple in particular, and the whole country in general, can be discussed under the popular term of ‘[colonial] governmentality’. Under this broader political issue⁶⁹, I raise another issue, which is directly linked with the ongoing theoretical debate in the anthropology of pilgrimage, which I discussed in the Introduction. Most of the recent anthropological studies on pilgrimage centres are either supported or discredited by each of the ongoing perspectives: the Turnerian and the competing discourse. The former emphasises unity or solidarity as a defining feature of pilgrimage, and the latter raises a question about pilgrimage as a homogeneous phenomenon and depicts it as contested, or made up of discrepant discourses. Needless to say the material that I present in this Chapter does not substantiate the argument put forward by a Turnerian perspective.

Let me first make clear my usage of the Foucauldian notion of “governmentality”. In the Foucauldian sense, governmentality is a novel kind of governance that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth century. It happened when feudalism was failing and when there was a loss of power of the absolute monarch. Although there is no monarch with absolute power now, we do have government. To a large extent this is

⁶⁹ Due to given space, the discursive construction of Sri Pāda as ‘Adam’s Peak’ cannot be included in the main body of the thesis, please find them in Appendix III.

internalised by people, but there is also a level of surveillance and reinforcement of conformity to the rules. This new kind of governmentality was made possible by the creation of specific (expert or professional) “knowledges” as well as the construction of experts, institutions and disciplines (e.g., medicine, psychology, psychiatry) so that individuals who we think of as experts could claim the knowledge necessary to assume the power of governmentality. But Foucault pays little attention to colonialism in outlining ‘European’ governmentality. Hence, some scholars have endeavoured to reformulate this Foucauldian notion in order to understand colonial forms of power that led to a construction of the “modern subject” and the governing of bodily conduct: in other words, to explore how the political sovereignties of colonial rule were constructed and how they operated. And it is this reformulation which has been conceptualised as “colonial governmentality”. But colonial governmentality, Prakash argues, had to be radically discontinuous with the Western norm (1999:125). He argues that Colonial governmentality was obliged to develop - in violation of the liberal concept that the government was part of a complex domain of dense, opaque, and autonomous interests - that it only harmonized and secured with law and liberty. It also had to function as an aspect of coercion, the institution of the sovereignty of alien rulers (cf.1999: 126). David Scott, in his rendition of “Colonial governmentality” (1999: 23-52), argues that Colebrook-Cameron reforms⁷⁰ in (1829) 1833 (“the point of application of colonial power”) were designed to support a “transformation of power” in Sri Lanka, from one of direct rule to one in which changed social conditions would produce natives who would automatically “do what they ought”. For him, the Colebrook-Cameron Reforms are significant in the displacement of the old mercantile politics of territorial expansion and introduced a new politics into the colonial state, —a politics in which power was now directed at the conditions of social life rather than the producers of social wealth (ibid.). He shows that the crucial point here is not whether natives were included or excluded so much as that there was “the introduction of a new game of politics” that the colonized would be obliged to play if they were to be deemed political. In such conditions one of the things the new game of politics came to depend upon was the

⁷⁰ These reforms basically led to the unification of the administration of the island, the establishment of executive and legislative councils, judicial reform, the development of capitalist agriculture, and of modern means of communication, education, and the press (cf. Scott 1999: 42).

construction of a legally constituted space where legally defined subjects could exercise rights, however limited they were (ibid.) by broader agreement with both Scott's and Prakash's apparatus of the colonial governmentality, as they seek to reformulate it as new forms of knowledge, and new technologies, and as the production of new effects of order and subjectivity. The problem arises as to whether the colonial governmentality can be regarded as a "whole" or whether it is a set of technologies that lend themselves to selective adoption by different governmentalities. Surely "governmentality" should be understood as a power dispersed through the social body. But as Peter Pels states 'It cannot be regarded as a singular colonial strategy, and we ought to study the struggles going on among groups of colonizers and colonized and between them, not only over the control of governmental technologies, but also over their appropriateness, application and desirability' (1997: 174). It is this line of argument I follow, because as we shall see in the case of the governance of the Sri Pāda temple the disputes, disagreement, conflicts, and debates not only occurred among/between groups of colonized subjects (in this case; monks, local elites and temple servants) but also colonizers (e.g., colonial officers, administrators, and missionaries) on the appropriation and the application of 'governmental technologies' in the control of temple's affairs. The disagreement and agreement over governmental technologies and their appropriateness, application and desirability over Sri Pāda temple affairs show us that 'governmentality' simply cannot be understood as a singular colonial strategy. It is far more complex when we look seriously at the legal and the administrative operational apparatus. Let me test this position in relation to governance of Sri Pāda temple under British colonial supremacy.

Given the number of pilgrimage sites and temples in British Ceylon, with their cultural importance and economic status, they had to be dealt with through the new administrative and legal technologies of the coloniser. Sri Pāda was one such place where colonial governmentality was both implicitly and explicitly engaged in the management and control of its temple affairs through the new technological modalities. The control and management of Temple affairs under new administrative and legal technologies, and the disputes that arise as a result of such control, have

been examined in connection with large temples in South Asia particularly South India and Sri Lanka by several anthropologists. Among the works on South Indian temples, those by Arjun Appadurai (1981), Chris Fuller (1984), Franklin Presler (1987), and Anthony Good (1989: 233-257, 2004) are notable, and in Sri Lanka Elizabeth Nissan (1985 Chapter 06, 07 & 08), Mark Whitaker (1999) and Rohan Bastin (2002: 34-39) have paid attention to the subject. In his (1981) *Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A south Indian Case*, Appadurai provides a close, detailed study of the changes brought about in the Sri Partasarati Svami Temple of Madras during two hundred years of British rule. For Appadurai, the absurd British combination of an ability to legitimate the results of conflicts with a complete inability to solve them often proved disastrous. The British, who found the role of royal protector distasteful, tended to view temples as 'charitable trusts' and, hence, as institutions that should be capable of setting their own affairs by traditional means. Thus for the British when these traditional means proved inadequate, they were codified under trust law, and by courts or commissions of inquiry. But this attempt, Appadurai argues, to cut temples and their conflicts adrift from colonial authority often had bizarre results. In fact, the search for solutions to such a fixed set of 'traditional' rules was largely conducted in British courts (1981: 211). In that case, ironically, he shows the transferral of authority to settle conflicts from a 'protector' to a fixed set of 'traditional' rules, whereby the British unwittingly moved temple conflicts from the temples to the courts where those rules were established. The British found themselves involved in temple affairs in a way far more fundamental than any South Indian king ever had - that is, as the 'legislators' of a minute, complex, and variably presented 'tradition' rather than as 'administrators', occasionally constrained by circumstances to lay down the immediate but not perpetually binding law (ibid.).

Before discussing the governance of Sri Pāda temple and the conflicts that arose within it under the new form of colonial legislative power that was exercised over control or management of temple endowments, it is important to briefly explain the contractual boundness of the colonial regime involved in safeguarding the Buddhist institutions. The authority for "safeguarding Buddhist institutions" was obtained

from the Kandyan Convention or from the treaty - by which the kingdom was ceded to the British—that contained the clause ‘The Religion of Boodhgoo professed by the Chiefs and inhabitants of these Provinces is declared inviolable, and its Rites, Ministers and Places of Worship are to be maintained and protected’. The British officials in Kandy publicly declared: ‘We are not come to this country to destroy the Religion of Buddha and the Gods, which have prevailed from ancient times in this country, but to protect and promote it’ (cf. Malalgoda 1993 [1969]: 8). As promised, at least for some time, they took some measure to safeguard Buddhism and accepted the authority of the monks of Siyam fraternity (*Nikāya*) over Buddhist affairs in the island particularly over monk of both Malvatta and Asgiriya Buddhist establishments. This authority was exercised through the two separate councils of the monk or *Kāraka sangha sabāha* at Malvatta and Asgiriya and each council consisted of more than ten monks under the leadership of a chief monk or Mahanāyaka. These two *Kāraka sangha sabāha* were the only monk councils recognised by the Colonial regime and that recognition further authorised by granting an allowance worth of 106 pounds to Malvatta sangha council and 70 pounds to the Asgiriya sangha council⁷¹.

However, under enormous pressure that was brought by the Christian missionaries on the British colonial state to avoid interference with Buddhist affairs, these promises were not kept. The colonial policies and strategies on Buddhist affairs were adjusted and reconstituted to normalize the missionary pressure on the government affairs. However, under this policy revision the colonial engagement in controlling temple affairs such as land and wealth and the appointment of chief incumbency of those wealthy temples were not excluded. These are the more striking and the controversial areas that rulers had to deal with even before/after the British period. As Appadurai and Breckenridge point out ‘Control over endowment is only one potential locus of conflict in the temple’ (1976: 204). Sri Pāda is not exceptional in this regard. However, as in the case of Sri Pāda - though the origin of controversies

⁷¹ This allowance was stopped in 1847 and was reintroduced it in 1856 not in cash but by donating some land (63 acres) to them. However, the recipient monks made a complaint that the income from these lands was not equal to the cash payment. As a positive response to that complaint the Colonial state allowed them to collect grain tax as additional revenue from six different villages in the region until the abolition of the grain tax in 1893. (A letter to governor Hugh Clifford in 1911 by Tibbotuwawe Sri Siddarta Sumangala, Chief Priest of Malvatta; VD collection).

regarding temple control over endowment can be traced back to pre-British time - I argue that the eruption of temple disputes in British Ceylon were the product of new administrative and legal technologies of Colonial governmentality. Some of these disputes were not only generated but also further complicated and unsolved even after the end [physically] of the Colonial governmentality. But at the same time as Dirks reminds us, I would not undermine their skill in managing to maintain order in spite of their many failures (1992: 199). The British colonial affairs relating to Sri Pāda shed new light on the above subject but we must still carefully examine the material available on their engagement with the temple affairs.

The colonial material available on Sri Pāda temple affairs is incomplete at a number of levels, and most of it comes from the reports, diaries and correspondence of the Government Agents or Assistant Government Agents involved, along with some reports on the court cases, petitions, letters involved in the temple affairs. I also found some important material through the personal collections of two Buddhist monks (Vehālle Dhammapala [VD] and Kampane Gunaratana [KG]) in Sabaragamuva. It is through these sources that my excavation on how British 'legislative' and 'administrative' technologies affected Sri Pāda temple affairs is discussed. It is important to note here that the bulk of the material in front of me was generated through the disputes regarding the appointment of the chief priests throughout the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Hence, they provide some insight into how British institutional technologies in general were shaped by, or reconstituted the pre-British institutional arrangement in the religious affairs in the island, more precisely Sri Pāda temple affairs.

3.2 General causes behind the disputes

Before discussing the disputes it is worth considering why Sri Pāda temple was the focus of protracted and sometimes bitter conflict in both the British colonial and post-colonial eras. This temple was/is the largest recipient of offerings made by pilgrims, among other popular pilgrimage sites in the island and it claimed direct control by the monks of the Malvatta Chapter (*pārshava*) of Siam Nikāya in the

province of Sabaragamuva⁷². The Sri Pāda temple's annual income was always far ahead in comparison to other main pilgrimage sites in the island such as the Temple of the Tooth relic in Kandy, the shrine of god Kataragama, and the Bo Tree temple in Anuradhapura. For example, an available budget description of Sri Pāda temple in 1837 shows that the approximate net income in cash was £30 and value of things such as robes, cloths and rice was £60, but this does not include the large income that came from the temple land of Kuttapitiya.⁷³ In 1876 the annual offerings in cash amounted about £200, and in kind to about £50, and paddy from Kuttapitiya was worth £12 or £15. The offering brought by the tenants was worth about £50 per annum and the services of the tenants were worth about £70 a year.⁷⁴ Two recent examples, the first being the Public Trustee's Administrative report in 1936/37 shows that the cash offering in 1936 was Rs.9261.62 and in 1937 Rs.11212.80 and the total balance to the credit of Sri Pāda temple was Rs.37586.30⁷⁵. However, the similar report in 1962/63 and 1964/65 shows that the amount of cash offering received by Sri Pāda temple in comparison to other pilgrimage sites was the highest amount:

	1962/63	64/65
Sripadastana	Rs.182, 929.48	2,13,195.67
Kataragama	51,825.44	64,842.69
Temple of the Tooth Relic	58,214.67	42,776.27
Atamastana (Anuradhapura)	16,480.64	25,455.57 ⁷⁶

According to the unconfirmed report, the cash offering received during the 2000/2001-pilgrimage season was about seven million rupees. In addition to that, Sri Pāda temple received a large amount of money by renting stalls (*kada*) and leasing

⁷² The incumbency of Sri Pāda was assumed only second to the posts of Asgiriya and Malvatta Mahanayakas (chief monks) and like the Mahanayakas of the both Nikaya, the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple has the equal voting power when appointing the *atamasthana adhipathi* at Anuradhapura.

⁷³ For a detailed account, see Kirielle Ñānavimala 1967: 63-64.

⁷⁴ The evidence given to the Buddhist Temporalities Commission by Iddamalgoda as the chief officer or Vidane of Sri Pāda temple village, Kuttapitiya and also the chief custodian of main Saman Shrine (Basnayaka Nilame) at Ratnapura. (Sessional paper of the Legislative council 1876-7: 24).

⁷⁵ AR 1937.

⁷⁶ AR 1965.

the temple land for plantation and gem mining and from the interest of the bank deposit⁷⁷. It is these economic resources that are most important when claiming to the office of chief monk of Sri Pāda temple. However, there were other concerns of equal importance with regard to erupting disputes for the chief incumbency at Sri Pāda particularly claiming for right of the controlling Sri Pāda temple under the pupillary generation (*sisyānu sisya paramparāva*) of a particular monk⁷⁸. This latter concern is dominant but always connected with the first concern.

Figure 3.1: The succession of Sri Pāda chief priests from mid 18th to 20th century.

Vālivita Saranamkara (1751-1753)
 Vehälle Dhammadinna (1753-1775)
 Kamburupitiye Gunaratana (1775-1780)
 Malimbada Dhammadhara (1780 –1785)
 Karatota Dhammarama+ (1785-)
 Moratota Dhammakandh Kobbakaduwe Sri Nivasa-Vālivita Saranamkara (Jr.) and Gammulle Sumana (1786-1825)
 Gāllē Medhankara (1826-1836)
 Indurūve Sumangala (1836-1858)
 Galagama Attadassi (1860-1866)
 Hikkaduve Sumangala (1869-1911)
 Paragala Sobita (1912-)*
 Rambukpota Paññasara (1913-1925)
 Morontuduve Dhammānanda (1954-1970)
 Batugedara Yasassi (1970-1986)
 Handapāngoda Wimala (1986-)⁷⁹

⁷⁷ According to unofficial source the total deposit was around 50 million rupees by 2002. A considerable amount of the temple income is spent on staff pay and their food, expenses of daily puja & festival, repairs, maintenance and construction, wages for goods suppliers etc.

⁷⁸ In Buddhist ecclesiastical law, two modes of succession to the incumbencies of temples are recognised. The first, and most common, is known as '*sisyanu sisya paramparava*' and entails the transfer of the incumbency from teacher to pupil. The second mode of inheritance is a variant of the first, and is known as '*nati*' or '*sivuru paramparava*'. Under this system, a relative of the incumbent is ordained as his pupil and succeeds to the office. (see Malalgoda 1976, Blackburn 2001: 62-65). Most temples in Sri Lanka operate under the *sisyanu sisya* system.

⁷⁹ + Removed from the post by Rajadhi Rajasinha -*Died in the same year

3.3 The emergence of two rival monks

The controversies over the control of Sri Pāda temple affairs emerged between Saranamkara's pupils who resided both in Kandy and Sabaragamuva. Disputants from Sabaragamuva⁸⁰ argued their respective claims in terms of pupillary succession of the "ancestral" monk, Vehälle Dhammadinna, while Kandyan [Malvatta] monks⁸¹ made a direct claim through the founder of the Siyam Nikāya, Vālivita Saranamkara.⁸² This was the beginning of two rival groups of monks (the Kandy monks can be designated as 'up country', while the Sabaragamuva monks mainly come from low country coastal towns) of the pupillary lineage of Saranamkara in the Siyam Nikāya, which was established under the patronage of Kandyan king Kīrti Sri in mid eighteenth century. The Kandyan monks came mainly from the Kandyan *radala* (aristocratic) families, the highest segment of the Goyigama or cultivation caste, whereas most Sabaragamuva monks came from less privileged families of the same caste of the low country regions. Whatever their social and regional affiliation, just after demise of their supreme leader Vālivita Saranamkara, they began to hotly compete for control of the lucrative Sri Pāda temple. The competition to control Sri Pāda temple basically emerged by undermining what Ann Blackburn has identified as "the Saranamkara centred textual community" (2001). The aristocratic monks who held the main office of the Malvatta establishment were opposed to the control of Sri Pāda affairs being in the hands of the Low country monks⁸³. The controversy began after the appointment of a member of the Sabaragamuva monk of Vehälle pupillary lineage, Karatota Dhammarama, as the chief monk of both the low country and Sri Pāda temple by the succession of Kīrti Sri, king Rājadhi Rājasinha (1780-1798). Shortly after the appointment, Karatota was dispossessed of control over Sri Pāda. His position was given to a well-known Kandyan aristocratic monk, Moratota

⁸⁰ In using the term "Sabaragamuva monk", I exclude monks of other Nikayas of the province.

⁸¹ Malvatta or Kandy monks I referred to are monks who are connected with the temples of Malvatta Viharaya in Kandy

⁸² There was another controversy within the Malvatta Temple that was between pupils of Moratota and Valivita (kuda) (Junior.) Saranamkara (cf. Malalgoda 1976: 86).

⁸³ For a fruitful discussion of the controversies of the 'up country' and 'low country' monks (see Malalgoda 1976: 82-87).

Dhammakandha. Since then monks of Vehälle pupillary lineage of Sabaragamuva lost the power to control Sri Pāda temple affairs for nearly fifty years to the Kandyan aristocratic monks, but the controversy on the chief incumbency remained unsolved. This dispute took a new direction after the subjugation of the Kandyan geo-political territory to the British in 1815 and continued as a hotly contested issue even in the post-colonial landscape of the monks' politics around Sri Pāda temple.

Interestingly, during the Nineteenth century, disputes on the Sri Pāda temple's chief incumbency had mainly occurred *between* Kandy based aristocratic monks who claimed direct link to Saranamkara, and Sabaragamuva monks who claim their ancestry to Vehälle Dhammadinna. Ironically, throughout the Twentieth century, disputes had widely occurred *among* the monks of Vehälle *paramparāva*, particularly those located in two different centers: Ratnapura and Colombo. The "Colombo monks"⁸⁴ were basically educated but not wealthy, while Ratnapura monks were not so educated but they were wealthy landed monks.

The disputes between the monks of Vehälle *paramparāva* were further complicated when another group of monks from outside the Vehälle lineage (namely Abhayaraja *paramparāva* of the Ratnapura Malvatta sect) began to contest for the lucrative Sri Pāda temple. In the disputes of the late nineteenth century, the Kandyan monks of Malvatta (the supreme council of the Malvatta establishment) took the side of the Colombo monks and strengthened their positions in Ratnapura (Sabaragamuva) by appointing Colombo monks to the highest official positions of the Malvatta establishment in the Province. But such appointments were further laid to escalate disputes between those rival groups.

The monks were not alone in such temple disputes: the well-known local aristocratic families both in Kandy and Sabaragamuva were also equally divided and challenged each other, some among them trying to bring their own local monks as the chief incumbents of Sri Pāda temple. Some of them hotly competed for the temple Trusteeship and the Buddhist Temporalities Committees (BTC), which was created

⁸⁴ I mean here monks who resided and taught at the prestige Vidyodaya monastic college in Colombo, basically monks like Hikkaduve Sumangala and his pupils.

under the British legal machinery for managing temple endowments. Under such new conditions, by the late nineteenth century the Sabaragamuva landed élites stopped backing the landed Vehälle monks of Ratnapura, because these monks rejected their 'new' authority's control over the temple endowments in the province and began to support either educated "Colombo monks" or monks of Abhayaraja *paramparāva* of Ratnapura. Before going into the detail of these disputes, and the issues raised by them, it is necessary to fill in the general background against which they arose.

3.4 Temple Disputes and British Governmental Technologies

As we have seen in the last Chapter, the right over controlling Sri Pāda temple affairs was 'traditionally' gained from the Kings who were, according to Buddhism, generally responsible for the 'protection' of temples. As Appadurai puts it, kingly action in regard to temples, whether expressed in gifting or disputes arbitration, was, in a particular ethnosociological sense, not legislative but administrative (1981: 214). Until the British conquered the Kandyan kingdom in 1815, the system had been uninterruptedly practiced. British governmental technologies, which changed the relationship between government and religious institutions, are generally seen by historians as having had a deleterious effect on Kandyan Buddhist institutions. The support of the king, and the economic base of the land tenure system, provided a crucial foundation for the well-being of the Kandyan monasticism. The king appointed monks to high office and to the incumbencies of particular temples, and the effective authority of senior monks was sustained with royal backing. The chiefs, on behalf of the king, enforced the tenorial obligations of tenants to temples. However, after 'disestablishment' of Buddhism under the British, as Malalgoda (1976) puts it, along with the changed basis of land tenure, the Buddhist hierarchy was weakened and its institutions began to fall into disarray. After 1832 there was no longer anybody to enforce service obligations to temples and after 1853 government ceased to make monastic appointments. The authority of senior monks at the Malvatta and Asgiriya establishments was questioned, but they had no sanctions, and their decisions were ignored. Thus, disputes and corruption became rampant in the Kandyan temples including Sri Pāda temple.

In order to control such situations, the colonial government introduced new legislative technologies, popularly known as 'Buddhist temporalities'. Under this technology a commission was set up in 1854 to register temple lands but legislation on the administrative modalities was not finalized and brought in until 1889. Similarly, another commission was set up in 1870 under the Service Tenures Ordinance. It enabled temple tenants to commute their required services for an annual cash payment. These new modalities proved unworkable and incompatible with the existing 'traditional' administrative modalities and were later revised on several occasions (Rogers 1987 349-369). Finally, after decades of transgression, in 1931 a new Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance was introduced for 'proper' management of the temples and the deity shrines under the Public Trustee. This technology had operated even under the postcolonial governments and began to change in mid 1980s. Before all sorts of technologies for managing temples came into operation, until 1853 the major monastic appointments were organised by the colonial government and were basically issued in writing. But after 1853, the procedure for such appointments was altered. The British colonial government no longer wanted to be so closely associated with appointments of chief monks and the lay Trustees of deity shrines (*Basnāyaka Nilames*), [this was because in 1839 missionaries and evangelicals in Britain launched a campaign against any official connection with the 'heathen' religion] and so it was decided that succession was to be decided by the monks of temples where such vacancies occurred and that government would then authorize this by issuing certificates to the chosen chief monk so that the property rights of temples could be enforced in court.

However, Sri Pāda temple was treated as a special case under these new modalities⁸⁵. Interestingly, the colonial government wanted the monks of the Malvatta sect who lived in the Sabaragamuwa Province to elect "the chief priest of Adam's Peak" [Sri Pāda temple] but not the chief monks of the Malvatta establishment in Kandy as they had under the Kandyan kings. In 1860 the new technology of appointing the chief

⁸⁵ This practice was also introduced to three other leading monasteries in the country among them election of monks to the Malvatta and the Asgiriya supreme sangha council came under this modality.

priest of Adam's Peak was tested. However, the Kandyan monks were not happy with the decision and continually protested by sending petitions and letters to the colonial authorities claiming their authority over such appointment and their eligibility and right to hold the office of the chief priest at Sri Pāda temple as they had on the previous occasions.

3.4. i The Establishment of a Commission

As a response to the argument of the Kandyan monks, Sabaragamuva monks of the Malvatta sect claimed that holding of the office of chief priest of Sri Pāda temple had been a duty of the monks of the pupillary lineage of Vehālle Dhammadinna. Moreover, they began to legally challenge the eligibility of the Kandyan monks to hold office at Sri Pāda temple. This was in 1825, when the matter came up before the Board of Commissioners in Kandy. In the following year, the control of Sri Pāda temple was taken away from the Kandyan monks and given back to the Sabaragamuva monks⁸⁶ on the recommendation of George Turnour, the Agent of Government at Sabaragamuva, who was directed by the commissioners to make a special inquiry into the case. Under this commission, Gāllē Medhankara, a member of the Vehālle pupillary lineage was nominated as the new recipient of the chief priest at Sri Pāda temple. His appointment was fully supported by the landed Sabaragamuva elites. However, appointment of Gāllē Medhankara was unaccepted by the Malvatta monks in Kandy who sent several petitions to the Governor, Edward Barnes, in order to reclaim their 'traditional' authority on appointing and controlling such temples in the country.

In response to this claim, the government agreed to give 'as a mark of favour' and 'not as a right' a quarter of the revenue of Sri Pāda temple to the Malvatta high priest. But after the death of the high priest this grant was abolished. It is hard to see that Kandyan monks had dropped their claim on the revenue of Sri Pāda temple⁸⁷.

⁸⁶ In the same year under the recommendation of Governor Edward Barnes (1824-1831), Karatota Dhammarama (1734-1827) was awarded the chief incumbency of Sabaragamuva and the Low country and just after his death, this post also came under the name of Galle Medhankara, a pupil of Karatota.

⁸⁷ They continually sent petitions against the succession of Galle Medhankara; some of them were a bitter personal attack (see in KGC: a letter on 24th of November 1849 to Governor Torrington). Similarly on 31st of January, 1848 Mahanayaka of Malvatta, Galgiriya Dharmarakshita was sent a letter of warning with the signatures of few other monks and the Kandyan elites to local offices

After the death of Gāllē Medhankara in 1836 his chief pupil, Indurūve Sumangala was appointed as the chief priest of the Sri Pāda temple and the provinces of Sabaragamuva and the South. This was the last appointment made by the colonial government before it ceased to be involved with such matters in 1853. The implementation of bureaucratic and legislative control over Sri Pāda temple affairs in the early nineteenth century did not alter the existing disputes between Kandyan and Sabaragamuva monks of the Malvatta sect. Hence, the colonial government sought to introduce different technologies for the management of such situations.

3.4. ii The new regulative technique of the appointment of chief monk

After the death of Indurūve Sumangala in 1858, and under the new regulative technique of the colonial government on appointing the chief monk at Sri Pāda, Sabaragamuva monks of the Malvatta Chapter obtained 'autonomous' power to elect their own monk for Sri Pāda office. This was a new move but led the existing conflict into another field of contestation. In 1860, it was under this technique that Sabaragamuva monks elected their own monk for the first time, namely Galagama Attadassi, to Sri Pāda office. Attadassi was the monkhood brother (*pāvidi sahodara*) of the former chief monk of Sri Pāda, Indurūve Sumangala, and the younger pupil of Gāllē Medhankara. Under this new legislative technique, power which had been exercised over such appointment by the Kandyan monks was further undermined, and that power was transferred to a group of landed monks in Sabaragamuva. This is quite different from the situation described by Nissan at the Bo Tree Temple at Anuradhapura where the customary right to elect a chief Priest lay in the hands of certain chief laymen of the district (1985: 142-145) but not the hands of monks. However, in both cases the ecclesiastical authority of the Kandyan monks over these pilgrimage sites was unaccounted for. As Malalgoda (1976) shows in great detail, conflicts and controversies between Kandyan monks and the Low Country monks had eroded the ecclesiastical authority of the Kandyan monks. Continuing in this

(*lekam*) in charge of Sri Pāda and its temple land, not to overrule the authority that they assigned to two Buddhist monks and a well known élite of Sabaragamuva (Iddamalgoda) to collect the revenue at Sri Pāda and its temple land. (I found this letter from Vehalle Dhammapala in the collection on Sri Pāda at Meeaghoda temple in Palamadulla [VDC]). However this attempt was repulsed by the colonial government under request made by Induruwe Sumangala (See in KGC; A letter from Sumangala to colonial secretary on 22nd February, 1849 and Diaries of GA Sabaragamuva for 1848 in SLNA 45/350).

vein, he argues convincingly that the authority of the Buddhist ecclesiastical power “shifted” from Kandy to the Low Country (in the first place to Matara, followed by Galle, then Colombo). Malalgoda reads this event—support of taking the incumbency of Sri Pāda away from the Kandy monk and giving it to the Low country monks—as a further loss of the authority of the Monks in Kandy to the low country monks (in this case monks of the province of Sabaragamuva) (1976:140). It is important to note here that most of the Sabaragamuva monks of Malvatta Chapter had originally come from those coastal towns and had occupied positions in the province.

Though the Sabaragamuva monks had been involved in disagreements and controversies with Kandy, they continued to give formal recognition to the authority of the chief monks (Mahanāyakas) at Kandy by annually sending their pupils for higher ordination at Malvatta. Such practice continues today. But as the main centre of the Malvatta Chapter of the Siam Nikāya, Kandy repeatedly tried to assert the rights of the control of Sri Pāda temple affairs over Sabaragamuva monks. Such attempts were quite evident throughout the appointment process. The controversy between Kandy and Sabaragamuva monks continually escalated around the main question of who held the authority of office at Sri Pāda. The Kandyan monks seemed to be persistent in their struggle over the issue until they received a satisfactory answer from the colonial government. This brings us to the difficult problem of the interrelationship between British colonial government and traditional institutions like Malvatta establishment. The colonial government addressed the issue, as Whitaker reminds us, through ‘the language of rational-legal law’ and whereas the Kandyan monks like the authorities of Mandur temple approached it through a language of (following Appadurai) ‘temple ideology’, it was a language of dispute used (by temple élites) to secure ‘the paradigmatic sovereign’ under the British law (1999: 31-48). Though the Mandur temple élites secured ‘the paradigmatic sovereign’ of the temple under the unfriendly language of rational-legal law of the British, the Kandyan monks failed to do so. Hence they continued to bargain their authority over Sri Pāda temple affairs in the framework of rational-legal law of the British government.

The Kandyan monks temporarily gave up the contestation for Sri Pāda office but continually held (until today) the authority for appointing the chief priest for the Province of Sabaragamuva. As we shall see, through this appointment they could interfere in Sri Pāda affairs, rather than influence them in an implicit manner. So, after the appointment of Galagama Attadassi under the new selection process of the colonial governmentality, the disputes at Sri Pāda followed a new path. The disputes were further complicated by the emergence of rivalry between the landed aristocracy and the landed monks, like Attadassi in Sabaragamuva.

3.4. iii The Arrival of New Competitors: Sabaragamuva Aristocracy

This follows the direct engagement with Sri Pāda temple affairs by a group of influential members of the Sabaragamuva aristocratic (*radala*) family, the *Ratemahatmayas*. Before discussing their engagement with Sri Pāda temple affairs let me briefly explain their social position in the Province. In the pre-colonial political formation of the Kandyan Kingdom, the Sabaragamuva aristocracy had enjoyed relative autonomy and some of its chiefs had been noted for their rebelliousness against the authority of the kings of Kandy. On one occasion, to reduce its provincial chief's power, the king divided the province into two parts. There is also some evidence that the king had 'conferred superior office on men of a lower status than that from which it was customary to fill such positions' (Pieris 1950: 30). In 1815, some of the chiefs played a prominent part in the pro-British agitation in Sabaragamuva (ibid. 75) and in return for their assistance to the British they were rewarded with grants of land (ibid. 433 n.25). In opposition to that, some patriotic chiefs lost their lives in the 1818 great rebellion against the British conquest but their positions were later filled by some who were loyal to the colonial state and some who had not come from aristocratic families but were given such a position under the "new ordering project of native administration" under the gaze of British colonial governmentality (see Spencer 1986: 48-85; Meyer 1992). Colonial land policy enabled these families to amass much greater landholdings than they had ever held under the Kandyan kings (Spencer 1986: 82). As Spencer argues, the consolidation of their 'power' reached its height around the turn of the [20th] century,

which was to be challenged only by the advent of mass politics (2002: 91-109)⁸⁸. On the one hand they were designated as a homogeneous group because they were closely connected through marriage and kinship ties but on the other hand they were internally divided in the competition of the controlling economic resources and higher official titles in the province. Most of them were keen to hold the chief lay custodian (*basnāyaka nilame*) positions in the lucrative main deity shrines in the province. For example, Iddamalgoda began his career as a loyalist to the colonial government and later became the chief custodian of the main shrine for deity Saman in Ratnapura, a post, which seemed to be valued above that of *disava* (provincial officer). In 1824, he was first appointed as Vidāne of Kendangomuwa village; in 1834 Korala of Navadun Korale; in 1844, Basnāyaka Nilame of Maha Saman Dewale; in 1849 Ratemahatmaya of Nawadun and Kukulu Korales; in 1865 he resigned from Ratemahataya and retained the post of Basnāyaka Nilame (chief lay custodian) of *Maha Saman Dewale*, until he died.⁸⁹ Later they were quite competitively engaged in the management of lucrative Buddhist monastic institutions and the appointment of loyal monks to them. Sri Pāda temple is one such important place for them to bring under their control and management. From the early 1870s to the early 1950s they were able to do so. The colonial legislative mechanisms for Buddhist temple affairs helped them to consolidate their power not only over the temple economy but also over the monks as well.

Their active engagement in the appointment of chief priest to Sri Pāda temple can be traced back to the early nineteenth century. As I mentioned before, with reference to the appointments of Gāllē Medhankara and Indurūve Sumangala, their influences were quite evident.⁹⁰ There had been a close relationship between Sabaragamuva

⁸⁸ Spencer, also, argues that from the 1930s on, these élite figures self-consciously employed the popular appeal of nationalist ideology to fight their own more limited political battles (2002: 106).

⁸⁹ Report of Buddhist Temporalities Commission 1876: 23.

⁹⁰ The 'Report' of Mahavalatanne, Dolosvala and Delgoda to the Agent of Government at Sabaragamuva, 27 August 1825 on Medhankara's appointment. Similarly, Dolosvala Dissava together with two other Ratemahatmayas proposed the name of Induruwe Sumangala to the Assistant government at Ratnapura - this was clearly mentioned in a letter sent by AGA Ratnapura to GA at Galle (cf: Kirielle Nanavimala 1975:169-170).

élites and the chief priests of Sri Pāda temple in the early half of the nineteenth century. But such a cordial relationship began to deteriorate following the appointment of Galagama Attadassi as the chief priestship of Sri Pāda under the new 'legal-rational' of the British colonial rule. The Kandyan monks played a vital role in the breakdown of the relationship and created a sympathetic faction of monks and chiefs for their favour in Sabaragamuva.

It was under this faction that Galagama Attadassi was accused of some adultery charges and the mismanagement of Sri Pāda temple revenue. Under such accusations, on 10th of June 1866, Galagama was removed from the chief priestship and his position was given to a Colombo - based, well-known scholarly monk, Hikkaduve Sumangala⁹¹ who was a leading figure in the "Buddhist revival" at that time. Interestingly, Kandy monks did not object to this appointment; instead he was granted four higher honourable titles⁹² by them. At first, Hikkaduve was not much interested in taking up the Sri Pāda office but a group of elite in Sabaragamuva (namely Iddamalgoda, Maduvanwella, Ekneligoda, Elapata and Ellawala) insisted upon it.⁹³ Among them Iddamalgoda was able to establish an intimate relationship with Hikkaduwa. The result was that Hikkaduve appointed him as the Chief Officer or *Vidāne* of Sri Pāda temple and its temple land at Kuttapitiya.⁹⁴ Soon after the Hikkaduve's appointment, Iddamalgoda himself went to Galle, a Southern coastal town, where Hikkaduve was stationed and brought him to Palmadulla with great festivity where he obtained a certificate from the colonial state, which gave the authority for him to control Sri Pāda temple affairs⁹⁵.

⁹¹ Hikkaduve Sumangala was the most accomplished Pali scholar and the founder of well-known monastic collage, Vidyodaya, in 1873 (see: Sri Sumangala Charitaya by Yagirala Pannananda) in order to 'revive' monastic education in the context of British colonial rule.

⁹² Namely: chief priests of Nawakorale in Colombo and Galle District; Upaddiya (Teacher) of Malvatta temple, and Thripitaka Wagiswara monk (WD collection).

⁹³ Sri Sumangala Charitaya 81p. a Pali scholar Batuwantudawe was also among them.

⁹⁴ Report of Buddhist Temporalities Commission 1876:23

⁹⁵ *ibid.* 82p

3.4. iv Contestation between Landed Monks and élites of Sabaragamuva

In supporting Hikkaduve to secure his position as the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple against the local monk Attadassi, the colonial regime and its local ‘mediators’ in the province of Sabaragamuva did not carry out a personal favour to Hikkaduve. Rather I would argue, that it was the result (at least in part) of a struggle between local élites and “the landed or propitiate monks” of the province over the control of economic resources particularly land, which came to be heavily in demand after the establishment of the plantation economy in the Province by the middle of the nineteenth century. By this time much of the land in the province was either owned or controlled by the local élite (*radala*) families, or the monks of the ‘old’ temples (*rajamaha vihāra*). Unlike other Kandyan regions the monks who lived in these temples were not from the *radala* families in the province. As I mentioned above, most of them had their roots in Southern coastal towns like Matara and Galle. Initially, they took control of some of the ‘old’ temples (e.g., Sri Pāda, Palmadulla, Potgul and Gallenagoda), in the province under the Kīrti Sri-Saranamkara temple’s reordering project which became visible in the mid eighteenth century and they became influential ‘landed monks’ in Sabaragamuva.

Let me explain the economic situation of the landed monks as it was by the end of the nineteenth century. I found this information from inquiries made under the Buddhist Temporalities Commission in the province, which was held from 4th to 9th October 1876. Under this Commission several leading landed monks and the lay custodians of deity shrines in the province were investigated about their property ownership and the economic activities.

A chief monk of the Palmadulla Vihāra [temple] was asked by **Mr. Sawnders**, one of the commissioners: “Do you remember Sumangala Unnanse [monk], late high priest of Adam’s Peak?

The Monk answered: He was my tutor

Did you as his pupil succeed to the funds which he possessed when he died?—Three priests, of whom I am one, succeed to the property left by him.

How much money did he leave? —About £100 in cash, which was divided among his heirs and treated as private property.

Did you trade with the money left you and lend it out at interest on bonds? --
 I used it as I best could in my own interest. I have lent money out at interest”
 – How much money did you lend to a planter in Balangoda? --£70

What amount have you now in the bank? About £1000

Do you then consider such money the property of the priesthood as a body,
 and not your own property? -- No; I consider it to be my own.

In the next case **Mr. Dickson** interviewed **the chief monk of Kirielle Nadun Vihāra**- What land does that vihare possess?-- The whole of the village of Dumbara, including both low and high lands.- What income does that village yield to the vihare? I have given over the management to my brother to improve and repair the buildings, carrying on only the religious ceremonies myself, and only receiving the necessities of life. I do not know what the income is. - Does the village of Dumbara possess valuable plumbago pits? Yes. What is done with the money derived from them? It is spent on the temple and for other necessary purposes. - Is it not far in excess of what is required for the repair of the vihare? Sometimes it is; sometimes not. Anything in excess is spent on the improvement of the library and the temple. - Have you given a lease of these plumbago pits to your brother? I gave him a lease for four years and at the end of that time I gave him a power of attorney to act for me.

Mr. Dickson also interviewed another landed **monk at the Kottimbulwala Vihare**. What is the annual revenue, which that vihare receives from its lands? About £100 a year, exclusive of services.- Is the annual income only £100 a year? The last witness, who is the Ratamahatmaya of the division states that it is £1000 a year- I answered according to my knowledge. At what was the estate valued in the recent lawsuit in which you were defendant? £10, 020, including lands and buildings. -To what use is the old pansala [temple] put? It is occupied by traders- by whose permission is this allowed? By mine; but this has been going on since the time of the late high priest.- Has any ebony, satinwood or valuable timber been cut from the vihare forests and sold? I have given one *halmille* tree to a carpenter to get a bed made for

myself. About 500 spokes were cut out of the tree as remuneration. **Mr. C.P. Layard**, another member of the commission asked- Are you in the habit of selling cattle? I do not sell cattle- Do the cattle sold by the Moormen occupying the pansala bear the temple brand mark? All the cattle of the village have the same brand-mark, a Tamil character, which is the vihare mark. **Ellawala Ratemahatmaya**, only member who had represented Sabaragamuva elite in the Commission asked- Have you purchased lands after you became incumbent of Kottimbulwala; if so, to what extent? No; but I have lent £125 on mortgage on the security of some lands in the village.

When the Commission interviewed with the Ratemahatmaya of the temple area, **Molamure**, described the situation at the temple “The pansala is mostly occupied by Moorish people, and has been converted into a bazaar. The priest lives in a separate new pansala. The priest carries on a trade in cattle and timber just like a Moorman⁹⁶.

The broad picture that emerged from these investigations of the landed monks in the province clearly indicated how they had been heavily engaged in various economic activities and businesses, in a similar way to the lay élites in the region who were interested in the newly emerging “colonial economy” in Sabaragamuva⁹⁷. Without doubt there had been serious contestation between landed monks and the local élites over the control of local resources particularly the most valuable resource in the emerging economy: the land. In the view of a local élite these activities of monks are contrary to the *Vinaya* (disciplinary code of monks). It is during this dispute, I would argue that “Buddhist revival” (that included bringing influential leaders like Hikkaduve to Sabaragamuva) activities that emerged in the late nineteenth century in the south-western coastal area were brought into Sabaragamuva by its landed élites⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ Sessional paper of the Legislative council 1876-7: 27-28.

⁹⁷ Spencer has quite convincingly depicted how a Sabaragamuva élite family consolidated the economic resources through the intermediating between the colonial state and the peasantry while also acting as agents for colonial economic interests (1986: 48-85).

⁹⁸ One of the most notable Buddhist revivalist activities that was introduced to Sabaragamuva by the local élites was establishing and patronizing the radical *Amarapura Nikaya* (fraternity) temples in the province.

Malalḡoda reads this new development in Sabaragamuva in a somewhat simplistic way, and for him, ‘the Sabaragamuva élite always tended to patronize pious and learned monks with no great regard to their fraternity or to their social origins’ (1976: 139-143). But as I see it, they basically began to patronize the so-called “learned” or “erudite” monks not as simply as Malalḡoda thought but as a result of the growing unfriendly relationships with the local landed monks.

The appointment of Hikkaduve as the chief incumbent of Sri Pāda wasn’t personal, or more clearly it wasn’t an accidental one, but as I have argued it is partly a manifestation of the contestation between landed monks and the élites of the province who had been competing over the controlling of newly emerged “provincial economy” which was predominantly centred around land. In 1869, a colonial civil servant described the province as “the Temple-ridden District of Saffragam”⁹⁹ which indicates how crucial the controlling of the land [much of which belongs to temples and deity shrines] was in gaining the economic as well as the political power in the province.

In my view, the appointment of a chief priest outside of the Sabaragamuva province, would allow the local élites to participate in controlling Sri Pāda temple economy whereas local landed monks like Galagama Attadassi did not allow such things to happen under the élites like Iddamalḡoda. Iddamalḡoda played a vital role in the removal of Galagama from Sri Pāda chief incumbency in favour of Hikkaduve. He was appointed to the highest lay position, the lay custodian (*vidāne*), of Sri Pāda temple affairs, that would bring the management of the 165 amunu (one amuna is equal to 2.5 acres in the Sabaragamuva region) of paddy lands and more than 300 amunu of dry land of the temple properties under his jurisdiction¹⁰⁰. In addition to such vast control of land he also controlled 1042 amunu of paddy land and a further 727 amunu of dry land as the chief custodian (*Basnāyaka Nilame*) of the Maha Saman devāle near Ratnapura¹⁰¹. Hence, the appointment of Hikkaduve as the chief

⁹⁹ Seasonal Paper XVIII 1869.

¹⁰⁰ SLNA 37/354.

¹⁰¹ See SLNA 45/2737.

incumbent of Sri Pāda reflects a crucial aspect of the prevailing contestation between landed monks and the Sabaragamuva élites in the second half of the nineteenth century. But as we shall see in a moment, following the introduction of the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance in the late nineteenth century, the Temple affairs in the province came under the full control of the local élites.

3.4.v New Administrative Technologies for the Management of Temple Affairs

By the mid nineteenth century, the colonial state had introduced a new set of administrative technologies for the management of temple affairs on the island. This was popularly known as the “Buddhist Temporalities”. In 1854 legislation was passed but was not finalized until 1889, and results were found to be unsatisfactory, and new legislation was introduced from time to time to amend them. Under these legislative technologies, the management of temple affairs came before committees of lay Buddhists, known as the “Buddhist Temporalities Committees” (BTC). The BTC were predominantly dominated by local landowners and headmen. For example, the management of temples, and deity shrines in Sabaragamuva were structured under three interconnected lay committees: the Provincial Committee which was responsible for the overall Buddhist affairs in the Sabaragamuva Province (PBTC) and under its jurisdiction two District Committees were formed (Ratnapura and Balangoda) (DBTC) and these committees were dominated and controlled by the local élite groups who were the beneficiaries of colonial administrative sociology in the Province¹⁰². As Spencer points out, they were pivotal intermediaries between the colonial state and the mass of the peasantry in the region (1990: 215). It is not my intention to examine the vast impact made under these new colonial technologies over the existing “traditional” temple management strategies on the island,

¹⁰² The Provincial Committee held at Ratnapura on the 11th of June, 1893 and comprised as follows: W. Ellawala (President), J.W. Maduwanwela, S.D. Mahavalatenna, A.F. Molamure, and F. Ellawala. And Ratnapura District Committee representatives were reported as; Ekneligoda Tikiri Bandara [President] (Kuruvita Korale), D.L Banda (Kukul Korale) and J.L.Rambukpota (Navadun Korale); for Balangoda Committee- S.D Mahavalatenna [President] (Meda Korale), F. Pohorabawe (Kadawat Korale) and R.W. Banda (Kolonna Korale)-SLNA 45/2958.

particularly in the Province of Sabaragamuva¹⁰³. What I simply seek to do here is to show how these legislative and administrative technologies worked in shaping and reshaping Sri Pāda temple's management affairs. As we shall see in a moment, these new administrative modalities were further complicated, and exacerbated rather than ameliorated by the ongoing bitter conflicts in the management of Sri Pāda temple affairs.

It is under Ordinance No 3 of 1889 that, like other main temples, Sri Pāda management came under the newly created "Trusteeship". Trusteeship (*vidāne*) was normally hereditary, under this legislative technology it was replaced by the appointed rather than elected ones. However, surprisingly, until 1911 this new technique had not been introduced to the Sri Pāda temple. One reason was later found in a report of GA Sabaragamuva and he notes 'as a respect to Hikkaduve Sumangala; the government was reluctant to appoint a Trustee over Sri Pāda until his death in 1911'¹⁰⁴. Another obvious reason would be that the Ordinance did not fully operate as was expected and subsequently a new amendment was brought into force in 1905. It began to function fully only from 1st February 1907¹⁰⁵. Under the Ordinance No.8 of 1905, Provincial Committees (PBTC) were abolished so that the system would be simpler, under elected District Buddhist Temporalities Committees (DBTC). Under this new formulation the selection, appointment, and disciplinary control of Trustees of temples, and the deity shrines were vested under the DBTC. The representatives to DBTC were appointed under the voting system in which Buddhist males (that includes monks over 21) were eligible to vote in the election of their representatives for the period of five years.¹⁰⁶ It is not clear who these eligible

¹⁰³ Such attempt was made by Historian like K.M de Silva 'The government and religion: problems and policies, c.1832 to c.1910,' in *History of Ceylon* 1973: 187-212.

¹⁰⁴ SLNA 45/2966. The connection between Hikkaduve and the colonial government is further exemplified when his biographer, Yagirala Pannananda mentions an incident where the prelate was greeted by the governor Arthur Hamilton at a railway station. Apparently Sumangala's train had stopped at the station to make way for the governor's train and the governor, seeing the former, alighted and walked over, which must be considered an act of the highest courtesy by a British Governor (cf. Seneviratne 1999:133).

¹⁰⁵ SLNA 45/2960

¹⁰⁶ SLNA 45/2960 and *Ceylon Sessional Papers* 1956:35.

Buddhist males were but one thing is clear: under the new election system the colonial government tried testifying to western ‘democratic modalities’ in a ‘local’ setting¹⁰⁷. Exploring such a situation is beyond the scope of my work here. How they were elected does not matter, but as historian K. M. de Silva points out, the DBTC were given greater powers under the new legislative arrangement (1981: 349). Under the DBTC recommendations, the responsibilities of Trustees were set out. As the appointed Trustee, one is responsible for administering temple lands, keeping records on income and expenditure, the supervision of the temple staff and the upkeep of day-to-day temple affairs. The appointment of Trustee was basically made for a period of three years by the DBTC to which the Trustee was finally made responsible. Again, the members of the élite families in the Province held most of the Trusteeships of the temples and the deity shrines in Sabaragamuwa while they were controlled by the DBTC. For example, the Trusteeship of Sri Pāda temple almost became the property of Elapata, Ellawala and Ekneligoda families under the new arrangement.

These new modalities of the temple management undoubtedly challenged the authority of the landed monks and the hereditary Trustees (*vidāne, lekama*) who had been previously in control and enjoyed the temple revenue under their names. Tensions developed between legal Trustees and incumbent monks, and, as Kemper argues, the introduction of [new legal] lay Trustees undermined the authority of monks (1984: 401-21). Under the new ‘legal-rational’, monks who held the chief incumbencies at the wealthy Buddhist temples were only entitled to have an annual grant from the DBTC¹⁰⁸. Obviously, many monks were against this new arrangement, as is evident in the Sri Pāda case, and continually struggled to regain the power lost to the DBTC, but they were not successful until 1931. It was under the 1931 Temple Ordinance that the powers of the monks’ control and management of temple affairs were reactivated.

¹⁰⁷ Under the new system, Francis Theodor Ellawala (President), William Alexander Ekneligoda and P.B. Muttettuwagama were elected for the DBTC of Ratnapura -SLNA 45/2960.

¹⁰⁸ In 1921, Rambukpota Pannasara received Rs.1800 as the Chief Priest of Sri Pāda (SLNA 37/961). But some monks had to write letters after letters in order to receive their entitled allowance from the DBTC (SLNA 37/959).

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3.4. vi Ambiguity of the Technologies: Disputes between DBTC, Legal Trustees and the Chief Monks

The colonial 'legal-rational' technologies for managing temple affairs on the island were further problematized once they were applied to Sri Pāda temple affairs. This time the issue was raised very interestingly. That is, they asked whether Sri Pāda is or is not a temple. This issue came up under the new Ordinance of Buddhist Temporalities in 1905. Under the Ordinance a Buddhist temple was defined with the features of "vihāra or dagāba" [image house or pagoda]. In other words a Buddhist temple was identified under the new 'legal-rational' technology only when it had either the image house or pagoda. The definition of 'dagāba' became irrelevant to Sri Pāda in the first place because there was no 'dagāba' at Sri Pāda (even today). Then, an argument came up as to whether Sri Pāda had a Vihāraya (image house) or not. There was a strong opinion that Sri Pāda did not have a 'vihāra' hence it should not be regarded as a temple. Therefore, monks began to argue that the rules of the new Ordinance were not relevant to its management. Even GA of Ratnapura supported a monk's claim and subsequently reported that 'there are no images on it and that it is, therefore not a vihare.... An amendment to the definition of "Temple" is urgently required',¹⁰⁹. In response to GA's suggestion, an officer at the Colonial secretary's office strongly argued, and I quote his words, "why is it not a Vihare? There is a shrine, there is the Sri Pāda [sacred foot print] - and several small images of Buddha kept inside the railing- which qualify it being regarded as a Vihare".¹¹⁰ But this issue remained unsolved for several years. The Colonial government was not ready to make further amendments or redefinitions of the features of the 'Temple'. Instead, it encouraged the members of DBTC of Ratnapura to adopt the government's definition

It was essential that the DBTC came to a favourable conclusion, otherwise they would not have been able to control the lucrative Sri Pāda temple. But the problem remained unsolved. By this time the new chief monk was appointed and he continued the protest against the management of Sri Pāda temple under the DBTC of Ratnapura. He himself brought up the issue of 'vihāra' as the central point in order

¹⁰⁹ SLNA 45/2964.

¹¹⁰ SLNA 45/2964.

to undermine the authority of the DBTC. In 1915, after obtaining legal advice, the chief priest sent a group of men to collect the offerings while the DBTC appointed Trustee was in charge at the temple. The DBTC filed a case against him at the District Court of Ratnapura. It was revealed that the Trustee was not appointed by the DBTC according to the rules of 1905 Ordinance. On that basis the court declared it as a provisional appointment and therefore the Trustee had no legal status to collect offerings at Sri Pāda temple.¹¹¹ The court decision further complicated the dispute between the chief priest and the DBTC.

By the mid 1920s the new DBTC of Ratnapura was appointed and in 1928 they had the task of appointing a new legal Trustee to Sri Pāda temple. In this appointment the DBTC was split on two crucial issues¹¹². The first one was the eligibility for voting for the selection of the temple Trustee by the people of the newly attached villages. The secretary of the DBTC, was against such an arrangement but the president supported the voting right of newly attached villagers of Gilimalaya and Eratne in the election. The second issue was that the decision of DBTC's president to support the re-electing of outgoing Trustee who had been allegedly charged for the misuse of Sri Pāda funds.¹¹³ But the secretary wanted to support the new contender who came from the area of his jurisdiction. The secretary and the president of the Ratnapura DBTC were bitterly divided on these issues. On October 18th 1928, an election was held to appoint a new Trustee for Sri Pāda temple as scheduled, but the election was interrupted by the supporters of the president of the DBTC who later made an announcement on the postponement of the election,. However, the secretary and the two other committee members resumed the meeting and elected the new Trustee they wanted. Soon after this appointment, the former Trustee challenged the decision at the Ratnapura District court but it was rejected¹¹⁴.

¹¹¹ *ibid.*

¹¹² *ibid.*

¹¹³ SLNA 37/959

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*

In 1930, the new Trustee, like the previous one, was accused of corruption and after the hearing he was sacked from the post. One of the charges was that he kept none of the accounts required by the DBTC. The president of the DBTC was behind the dismissal of the Trustee. In the next appointment, the candidate who had openly been backed by the president of DBTC was elected.¹¹⁵ But on the eve of new legislation that appointment was limited to only a year.

By 1930, the colonial state had realised that the Ordinance of 1905 failed to “properly manage” the Buddhist Temple economies. To avoid such failures a new legislation popularly known as “*vihāra hā devāla gam panata*” was passed in 1931. Under the new ‘legal-rational’ the DBTC was abolished and administrative powers were returned to the Chief Priest of Temples. The new legislation also gave authority to the chief priest to appoint the temple Trustee and under this option most of the chief priests appointed themselves as Trustees of the respective temples. Furthermore, the colonial state took on a direct supervisory role over temples for the first time by making Trustees of temples answerable to the Public Trustee. For that task, the Public Trustee Department was created and a new Public Trustee was appointed. This new legal arrangement considerably reduced the authority of the local élites that they had previously enjoyed over the control of Buddhist temple economies. In other words, this new legislation reactivated the monk’s power over the control of temple economies (that had been enjoyed traditionally) that they had basically lost under the previous ‘legal-rational’ of the colonial governmentality.

Though the Buddhist monks in the country regained the authority over the control of the temple economies under the new legislation, the Sabaragamuva lay élite could still have influence over the management of Sri Pāda temple affairs. The main reason for this was that at this time there was no formally appointed chief priest at Sri Pāda temple to appoint a Trustee under the new regulation. The post of chief priest, from 1925 to 1954, remained vacant due to unsolvable disputes in the several attempts to fill the vacancy (see **Appendix IV and V**). Under the provision of new legislation, the Public Trustee, Paul Edward Pieris, a scholar and an administrator from a low

¹¹⁵ *ibid.*

country wealthy family, was able to appoint the acting Trustee to manage Sri Pāda temple affairs. Interestingly, Pieris appointed a man who was also from the low country (Colombo), from a wealthy business family, Don Philip Alexander Wijewardene, as the provisional Trustee of Sri Pāda¹¹⁶. Wijewardene did not belong to aristocratic class but he had accumulated considerable wealth and power as a member of the emergent groups of entrepreneurs. Among these new élites are members of the *Karāva*, *Salāgama* and *Durāva* castes and along with low-country *Goyigama* they profited amidst the new economic circumstances created in the era of colonial plantation capitalism (see Roberts 1982, Peebles 1995, Jayawardene 2000). Members of these castes became significant landowners and competed with the old landed élites, especially the *Goyigama* and, within this category, the aristocratic *radala* who hailed from the interior provinces like Sabaragamuva. It is under such conditions Wijewardene gained the power of controlling the important Sri Pāda temple from the hands of Sabaragamuva élites. As far as I am aware Wijewardene was the first Trustee – he came from the low country entrepreneurial class- and held a position previously held by the aristocratic groups. Later, in the 1950s, one of his brothers, D.C. Wijewardene, also became the Trustee of Sri Pāda temple (whom I will return to in the next chapter). Obviously, Sabaragamuva elites were not happy about Wijewardene's appointment and they did not cooperate with him.

According to an administrative report of the Public Trustee during the year of 1933, Wijewardene had failed to provide the temple's account in time and was sacked from his position as acting Trustee of the temple, and his position was given to S.A.I Elapata, a member of a well-known élite family in the Province of Sabaragamuva.

¹¹⁶ His was the elder of the seven sons and two daughters of Don Philip Tudugala (1844-1903) who came from his southern village to Sedawatte, a suburb of Kelaniya, and made a fortune in timber, bricks and sand business that he later took charge of. His mother, Helena Wijewardene (1864-1936) also came from the low country wealthy business family and became the leading patron of the construction of 'modern' Kelaniya Temple. One of his brothers, D.C. Wijewardene also became the Trustee of Sri Pāda temple and another brother of him D.R Wijewardene founded the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon (Lake House) and later married to one of two daughters of Meedeniya Adigar of a Sabaragamuva elite family. Jiggins has reported Wijewardene family as one of the founding families of the rightwing political party known as United National Party (UNP) (1979: 111-115). For the comprehensive genealogical account of the Wijewardene family (see Hulugalle, H.A.J 1960 and Jonathan Walter 1996: 94-107).

This appointment was described by the Public Trustee as ‘to the great satisfaction of the people of the district’¹¹⁷. Until 1954 the members of these élites families were able to hold the post of provisional Trusteeship at Sri Pāda temple.

In 1936, Sydney Ellawala, the grandson of William Ellawala who was a former president of the Ratnapura DBTC, was appointed as provisional Trustee. The situation with regard to the dispute over the chief priestship remained unsettled hence Ellawala could continue to officiate Sri Pāda temple affairs till 1954. During this period (from 1943 to 1947) there were several unsuccessful attempts to take over Sri Pāda temple affairs by a group of monks. As a part of such an attempt former provisional Trustee, Wijewardene’s brother, Don Charles Wijewardene (1893-1956) was nominated as the Trustee of Sri Pāda temple. The Public Trustee refused to make such appointment and blamed the leader of the monk group, Morontuduve Dhammānanda for having no legal right to the office of chief priest of Sri Pāda temple and hence had no authority to nominate the Wijewardene as Trustee¹¹⁸. However, this decision of the Public Trustee was challenged at the Colombo District Court. In 1954 the court decision was made in favour of Dhammānanda’s appointed Trustee¹¹⁹. Immediately after the court decision, Dhammānanda appointed D.C. Wijewardene as the new Trustee of Sri Pāda temple. However after just two years, Wijewardene died (his work and ideological influence in making the ‘Buddhicized’ Sri Pāda temple will be discussed in the next Chapter). Under the regulation of 1931 Ordinance, Dhammānanda (see next chapter) kept the Trusteeship himself while holding the chief priestship of Sri Pāda temple until he died in 1970¹²⁰.

As far as Sabaragamuva monks are concerned, the 1954 court decision was a historical one, because for nearly a half-century they were kept aside from the temple management affairs; that was precisely after the introduction of new ‘legal-rational’

¹¹⁷ Administrative Report of the Public Trustee for 1933.

¹¹⁸ In 1928 Dhammananda was appointed as the chief priest of the Province of Sabaragamuva by the Mahanayaka of Malvatta Chapter in Kandy.

¹¹⁹ The New Law Reports (NLR) Vol. Lviii, Government Press, 1956:78-92.

¹²⁰ Due to Dhammananda’s health matters he appointed Attiyagala’s brother-in-law as the Trustee in 1969 (Personal Communication with Pinnagoda Sumanatissa on 13th Nov.2001)

of the colonial state in the early part of the twentieth century. As an old monk said to me “In those days monks were onlookers, they only had to watch what local aristocratic (*radalavaru*) did in their temples”. But the battle to control temple economies between lay elites and the landed monks, even among themselves, in Sabaragamuva as I have already explained is not a simple one. As I have argued it needs to be understood as a product of the new “legal-rational” or as Appadurai puts it, the ‘legislative’ of the colonial governmentality. The British found a temple’s own ‘traditional’ administrative system incapable of managing the temple’s affairs ‘effectively’ and they were to be codified under new “legal-rational” and by courts or commissions of inquiry. However, as we have seen, such attempts of the colonial governmentality often had bizarre results (e.g., conflicts). Dirks has described a similar inability of colonial law in India to deal with conflicts over the estates of South India’s newly minted Tamil Zamindars. He argues that its failure, however, was really a kind of success. Like Zamindars, Buddhist monks in my case, according to Dirks, found more and more of their world swallowed by colonial law (1985: 201). Ironically, as we have seen in the case of Sri Pāda temple under the similar colonial “legal-rational” they could regain their authority over temple management but under the different form of colonial governmentality. The governmentality that had resituated the monk’s authority over temple affairs is quite contrary to what it did for them in the ‘early’ colonial governmentality. Under those governmentalities, the temple authority had to find solutions on the temple matters within the given legal frameworks (e.g., commissions, legislations or court settlements). This is quite contrary to what Mark Whitaker found in the east coast Hindu temple. He argues at the end of colonial law, even under the postcolonial nationalist counterforce, the temple authority could re-colonized or could preserve the “traditional” ‘temple ideology’ and the independent political character of the temple, which colonial authority was largely ignorant (1999). But as far as Sri Pāda temple is concerned the appointment and the shape of the temple organisation was not necessarily created, rather constructed on “traditional temple ideology” but rather on colonial ‘legal-rational’. This situation is quite similar to what Nissan has shown us in relation to the temples (*atmastana*) at Anuradhapura. She argues that many features (including the appointment of chief priest of the temple) of ‘traditional’ temple organization were

constructed by the British colonial regime (1985:133-243). We both agree largely on such a construction based not on the so called ‘temple’s tradition’ but the new ‘legal-rational’, which was introduced by the colonial governmentality. That is why even today the election to the appointment of Sri Pāda’s chief priest is largely worked out through fixed ‘legal-rational’ means and not under an invented temple ideology in Whitaker’s sense. The monks’ authority, that was reinstated (mainly on temple economies) under the late colonial ‘legal-rational’ measures, was further secured under postcolonial Buddhist oriented governments as well.

3.5 Conclusion

To conclude, as I mentioned at the beginning of this Chapter, the lucrative Sri Pāda temple economy created all sorts of contestations and disputes among the groups and individuals who wanted control of it throughout its long history. In the early part of the twentieth century the authority for controlling Sri Pāda temple was taken away from its chief priest and the ‘hereditary Trustees’ and vested under a newly created ‘legal Trustee’ who was responsible for another legal body known as ‘District Buddhist Temporalities Committee’ which came into operation under the colonial ‘legal-rational’ modalities. Under this colonial legal technology, the participation of monks in Sri Pāda temple management was substantially reduced and their role in the temple affairs were limited to its ritual practices. Hence, the chief priest of the temple significantly lost the privileges that he had enjoyed before this new arrangement came into operation. Under the new rule he was paid a limited allowance as recognition of his status as the chief priest. Significantly, this prised the monk loose from his place in a close symbiotic relationship with the ruler. Similarly, the hereditary Trustees who had controlled the ‘temple revenue’ on behalf of the chief priest now had to work under the authority of ‘legal Trustee’ and the person who always controlled this post was nominated against the will of the chief priest and the temple villagers. This shift marked the ‘power’ that monks and ‘hereditary Trustees’ had exercised under “the absolute monarch” vested into the local élite who had regimented under the legal bureaucratic framework of the “British colonial governmentality”.

However, the ‘inability’ to properly manage Temple affairs under this legal technology was found after four decades in operation. And in 1931 another centralized legal technology was introduced under the name of ‘Public Trustee’ for the management of temple affairs. Though the monks could substantially intervene on temple management under this new legal technology, Sri Pāda temple management remained under the control of the local élite until 1954. This was mainly due to an unsettling dispute over Sri Pāda incumbency, which began in the early 1920s between the two rival groups of monks. The continuous disputes erupted between rival monks’ groups in the appointment of the chief incumbency of the temple and constant struggles occurred between the chief monks, the ‘hereditary Trustee’, the ‘legal Trustee’, and the landed local élite in controlling the temple revenue began to intensify in the attempt to control the ‘Buddhist Temporalities’ under the ‘rational bureaucratic forms’ of the ‘colonial modernity’. So, I have shown that the appointment and the shape of the temple organisation were created rather than constructed along different forms of colonial ‘legal-rational’ lines rather than “traditional temple ideology”. Also I have pointed out that the Sri Pāda temple has not been governed under the influence of particular (colonial) governmentality or a set of technologies but under several governmentalities or sets of technologies. To remind us again of Peter Pels’ words with some modification: governmentality cannot be regarded as a singular (colonial) strategy, and we ought to study the struggles going on among groups of colonizers and colonized [even in postcolonial situations] and between them, not only over the control of governmental technologies, but also over their appropriateness, application and desirability (1997:175). Throughout this Chapter we encounter the unfinished contestations around the technologies, appropriateness, application and desirability in governing Sri Pāda temple affairs. Such contestations clearly indicate that sacred centres cannot actually be understood as a universal or homogeneous phenomenon but should instead be treated as places where constant contestations are evident.

Chapter 4: Reordering of Postcolonial Sri Pāda temple: ‘Sacred site’ or ‘Buddhist site’

Introduction:

As we have seen in the last chapter, temple management was reinstated under the authority of Buddhist monks as a result of the late colonial legislative arrangement of Buddhist temple affairs. Such power was further strengthened by the postcolonial Buddhist - dominated state. So, in this chapter and the following chapter, I discuss the process by which the Sri Pāda Temple has been remade or reconstituted as a hegemonic ‘Buddhist site’ concurrent with the rise of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in postcolonial Sri Lanka. In this chapter I concentrate on the politico-cultural momentum through which the postcolonial Sri Pāda temple changed from “sacred site” to a “Buddhist site”. I argue that the Buddhization of the ‘sacred site’ began after the control of the temple management was regained by Buddhist monks, more precisely by the enthusiastic monk, Morontuduve Dhammānanda (1890-1970) and later by his successors. In 1954, Dhammānanda became the chief priest of the Sri Pāda temple after winning a twenty-year legal battle; firstly against his opponent monks in Sabaragamuva and subsequently against the Public Trustee. Let me start this chapter with a glimpse of the situation at Sri Pāda temple before it returned to the jurisdiction of Buddhist monks in postcolonial period. Let me first quote, what John Still, a civil servant in the British colonial government reported on the Temple’s situation in 1928:

The Peak [Sri Pāda] must be one of the vastest and most widely revered cathedrals of the human race; but the shrine itself is only a little tile roof raised upon four pillars, or it may be eight, open on all four sides to every wind that blows, ... and the only other building there in my time was a small mud hut of one room, which I was lent by the monk in charge.

The following is a more recent account from a monk who served at Sri Pāda temple under the authority of a lay Trustee who belonged to a landed elite family in the Province of Sabaragamuva:

I was assigned to conduct the daily ritual at the footprint (*patma*), there were no monks other than me at the *maluwa* (Sri Pāda temple) in charge the religious service. Few lay people (*gihiyo*) were there to collect offerings at

the *patma*. I took up residence at the *maluwa* because my teacher (Këlle Sarananda) asked me to look after the *maluwa* during the pilgrimage season. He was approached by the then Trustee (*bharakārāya*) of the temple, Sidney Ellawala, who asked him if he would provide a monk to reside at the *maluwa*. My teacher suggested my name. That is how I ended up at the *maluwa*. Like today not much happened at *maluwa*; no preaching (*bana*), no chanting of *pirit*, no drum offering, no religious festivals. But I used to conduct a simple daily offering to the Buddha (*buddha pūjā*) at the *patma* (footprint).

Pilgrims came in large numbers but they didn't stay there because there weren't enough facilities for them. Hence, they come and go. There was no electricity until 1950 and no water supply system. There were two persons to supply water from a distant place (*āndiya malatānna* about 2km away from the *maluwa*). The permanent water supply system was started during the Rev. Dhammānanda's period.

In March, particularly *Mādin* full-moon day, a larger number of pilgrims visited the *maluwa* than in other months. That full-moon day my teacher used to come and stay with me for a few days. The Trustee, Ellawala *mahattaya* visited us twice in the month for inspection. He renovated the dilapidated wall around the *maluwa*, the mud floor area of the *uda maluwa* and the shrine of the deity Saman, and installed a new deity statue of Saman which was made of silver. And he placed a man at the shrine to collect offerings.

In 1954 I had to move from the *maluwa* because Rev. Dhammānanda wanted to replace me with a monk who had supported him in his election campaign. He knew that we hadn't supported him. Certainly, we supported his opponent, Rev. Ratanajothi. But I would say, Rev. Dhammānanda was a clever person (*dakshaya*). He organized Sri Pāda affairs (*maluve katayuthu*) methodologically (*kramānukulawa*). That made it easy for others to manage Sri Pāda after him. Even today Sri Pāda affairs run under his model.¹²¹

¹²¹ Interview with Rev. Këlle Kemananda on 30th Sept. 2001. He is 74 years now and the chief monk of Kawantissa Vihara at Panamure in the southern edge of the province of Sabaragamuwa. During the period from 1949-1954, he served as a ritual officiate monk at Sri Pāda temple.

The personal experiences of this monk shows us the ‘general situation or mood’ at the Sri Pāda temple just before Morontuduve Dhammānanda [more on him later] took control in 1954. Interestingly, the present ‘internal’ organization at Sri Pāda temple is not an “ancient” one in any sense (e.g., architectural, ritual or administrative) but was recreated or remade and introduced into the temple during the ‘reordering project’ of Morontuduve Dhammānanda (chief priest 1954-1970). Since Kandyan times, more precisely after the ‘reordering project’ of Vālivita Saranamkara (1698-1778) and king Kīrti Sri Rājasinghe (1747-1782) (see chapter 2), all Sri Pāda temple functions were performed by the tenants of the Kuttapitiya temple village (*vihāragama*), for which they were all rewarded with land. At the time of Dhammānanda’s takeover (in 1954) this traditional service system was completely not functional¹²². Hence, he introduced a ‘modern’ form of internal administrative and service organization to the temple, which was entirely outside the hereditary service providers with new arrangements mainly based on contractual or monetary relationships. Similarly, he also introduced an elaborate form of daily ritual practice to the temple because it was said that the ritual structure was not ‘properly organized’ compared to other national sacred sites of that time such as the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy and Kelaniya Temple near Colombo.

4.2 Ideological Formation of the Reordering

The new administrative and religious architecture of Dhammānanda’s internal organization of the temple is important not simply because it (re)made the Sri Pāda temple under the leadership of particular actor, a Buddhist monk, but because this project built upon the issues and concerns of the new ‘Buddhist identity’ in postcolonial Sri Lanka. In other words, the emergence of ‘Buddhicized’ Sri Pāda under Dhammānanda cannot be isolated from the larger project of Buddhist ‘national regeneration’, or Sinhala Buddhist nationalism(s), which became visible just before Sri Lanka was granted its independence from the British Empire in 1948. As we shall

¹²² According to the Report of the Commissioners of Service Tenures in 1870, there were eighty four (84) obligatory services that had to be performed by the tenants of Kuttapitiya oriented to temples belonging to Sri Pāda and its incumbency. Those services were registered and the lands attached to them also clearly listed under the Commission (see Silananda, Omalpe 2000: 144 – 207).

see in a moment, Dhammānanda explicitly supported, and was himself largely influenced by, this emergent dominant form(s) of the “national regeneration project”.

According to Seneviratne (1999), the roots of this project go back to the work and activities of the nationalist reformer Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933)¹²³ who found the monk to be the ideal choice for leading his ‘nationalist regeneration project’ which he initially constructed against Christian cultural encroachment into “Sinhala Buddhist culture” (ibid. 25-28). In making this choice, as Seneviratne puts it, ‘Dharmapala elevated the Buddhist monks to a position they never held before, and invested them with the specific secular role, which the ‘modern monks’ have come to believe as their ‘heritage’ (ibid.). Dharmapala, as Seneviratne explains, understood the new task of the monastery-led national regeneration to be twofold - economic and cultural. The economic project was taken up in the 1930s and 1940s by a section of the monks, primarily those of the Vidyodaya monastic college, founded in 1873 in the city of Colombo (ibid. 56-129). Their project, following Dharmapala’s plan, was ‘rural development’ for impoverished peasantry, and their general outlook, according to Seneviratne was to accept ethnic and cultural diversity as a fact of Sri Lankan life (ibid.). Ideally Dhammānanda (1890-1970) should have belonged to this group, identified by Seneviratne as ‘pragmatic monks’, because he

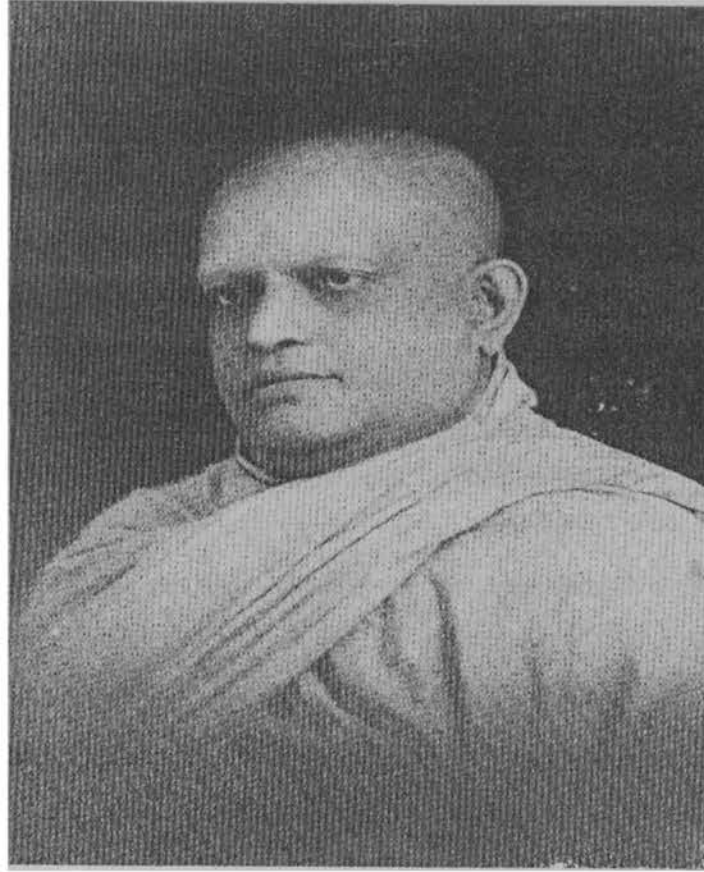
¹²³ He was born in 1864 as Don David Hevavitarana and died in 1933 as the Venerable Devamitta Dharmapala but is generally known as Anagarika Dharmapala. The name Dharmapala means “Defender of the (Buddhist) Doctrine.” The style Anagarika was an innovation. Dharmapala used it to denote an interstitial role between layman and monk; he used it to mean a man without home or family ties who nevertheless lived in the world, not in the isolation of a monastery. Dharmapala was from a Buddhist home in Colombo but was educated at Christian mission schools. His father, a wealthy businessman, had come to Colombo from southern Sri Lanka. Dharmapala met Olcott in 1880 and he joined the Theosophical Society in 1884 where he later became the manager of the Buddhist Theosophical Society. He also edited and produced the society’s newspaper, *Sandarāsa*. However, in 1906 he started his own newspaper, *Simhala Bauddhaya* (“The Sinhala Buddhist”) after separating from Olcott, in which he carried on polemics against the Buddhist Theosophical Society. From 1889 to 1906 Dharmapala travelled widely: first to Japan with Olcott; then to India, Burma, Thailand, Europe and United States where he represented Buddhism at the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893. In 1891 he founded the Maha Bodhi Society, whose primary goal was to regain control of the site of the Buddha’s Enlightenment at Bodhi Gaya in India. From 1906 to 1915, when he was exiled to Calcutta, Dharmapala lived mainly in Sri Lanka, and his Sinhala Buddhist nationalism intensified (cf. Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 205-224, also see Seneviratne 1999: 25-55).

was not only a product of the Vidyodaya monastic college, but also a popular teacher at the time of this rural development project.

Surprisingly, however, Dhammānanda did not become a member of this project. Instead he was ideologically inspired by the ‘cultural’ aspect of Dharmapala’s nationalist project which, as Seneviratne explains, was more favoured by the monks of Vidyānāgara, the other prominent monastic college founded in 1875, also located in Colombo (Seneviratne 1999: 130-188). This part of the project became visible in the mid 1940s and reached its climax in the electoral victory of the nationalist forces in 1956. Seneviratne goes on to say that, unlike the rural development monks of the Vidyodaya college, these monks advocated an exclusivist and hegemonic appropriation of the country for the majority ethnic group, the Sinhala, and their religion, Buddhism. These monks borrowed Dharmapala’s slogan ‘country, nation, and religion’ (*rata, jathiya hā agama*) and made it a rallying cry for the Sinhala Buddhists so as to justify depriving the Tamils and other minorities of their rights to equal citizenship (*ibid.*). Finally, Seneviratne sadly concludes that the cultural part of Dharmapala’s vision triumphed over ‘the more sober and benevolent economic part’ and prepared the country for social turmoil, economic stagnation and civil war (see 1999: 333-348). Put more simply, in Seneviratne’s view, the Vidyodaya monks were the good patriots, while the Vidyānāgara monks were the “narrow nationalists” who perpetuated an ideology that led to the path of moral “degeneration” (*ibid.* 128).

While largely sympathetic to Seneviratne’s project, I have difficulty locating a figure like Dhammānanda to his broad categories. The problem is how a reputed monk, like Dhammānanda of Vidyodaya monastic college where Dharmapala’s economic project had seriously taken into their core project, came to be a follower of his nationalistic project. There are no answers for those issues in Seneviratne’s theoretical formulations where he located his argument in Weberian, Durkhemian and Robert Bellah’s ideal type of religious modernity (see 1999: 1-24). This kind of theoretical formulation and the ‘homogenous’ conceptualisation fail to explain the way in which an agency like Dhammānanda had become disenchanted with the “rural development” movement and entangled with the ‘nationalist’ project. Such

questionable a theoretical formulation, as I explain in the introductory chapter, in the anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism is not only viewed in Seneviratne's works but also works of other anthropologists who belong to a similar intellectual tradition.



Picture 4.1- Rev. Morontuvedu Dhammānanda, Chief Priest of Sri Pāda (1954-1970)

4.3 The Agent (s) of Reordering

Let me now explain how Dhammānanda became a member of the Dharmapala 'nationalist' project, and how he eventually mapped out his own project for 'reordering' the temple of the 'sacred' footprint as a hegemonic Buddhist site. As I have mentioned briefly in the last chapter Morontuvedu Dhammānanda (1890-1970) was a well-educated monk who became a teacher at Vidyodaya at the age of 19, before he had mastered his Pali, Sanskrit and English languages and Buddhist teaching, under reputed teachers such as Hikkaduvedu Sumangala, but mostly under

Mahagoda Ñānesvara¹²⁴ at Vidyodaya. Born on 6 March 1890, Dhammananda was the second son of Kandane Arachchige Don Louis Appuhamy of Morontuduva, Wadduwa of the Panadura electorate. His lay name was Kandane Arachchige Don John Appuhamy. Dhammānanda was ordained in 1900, at age 10, by Deundara Jinaratana, at the Hunupitiya Gangaramaya and was given the monastic name Mahagoda Ñānesvara of Vidyodaya monastic college in Colombo. At Vidyodaya, he excelled in his academic work and won the Burmese king's prize, awarded for the best student in the final year of monastic studies. His excellent academic career as a student at Vidyodaya continued after he was appointed as a teacher there. He wrote several books, among which his *Saddharma Kaūmudi* was the most popular and it became a widely used text-book for beginners in preaching *dharmadesana* (sermon). In that textbook he introduced the 'method of *Dharmadesena*' and new topics for them. He not only wrote about *dharmadesena* but also earned a reputation as a good preacher of *dharmadesena*, as well as an orator. He was an active member of the *Tipitaka* (Three Baskets) revision project of the *Mahabodhi* Society founded by Anagarika Dharmapala in 1891.

In 1928, he was appointed as chief priest of the province of Sabaragamuva – a position previously held by his teacher and the Principal of Vidyodaya, Mahagoda Ñānesvara - by the *Kāraka Sangha Sabāhva* (Sangha Council) of the Malwatta Chapter of Siam *Nikāya*, who also later awarded him the honorary title of *Tipitaka Vagisvara*. After that, he was heavily engaged in Buddhist activities in Sabaragamuva, particularly the registration of the monks of the Malwatta chapter in the province under the new resolution passed on 'Buddhist temporalities' in 1931. Dhammānanda was also appointed as a co-ordinator for the overall registration project of Malvatta monks. This was the first project in which all monks in Sri Lanka were registered as members of the respective fraternities (*Nikāyas*) under which they were initially ordained.

¹²⁴ The sources for information on Dhammananda are: (a) oral information provided by his only pupil Pinnagoda Sumanatissa and other informants; (b) *Morontuduve Sri Dhammānanda nāyaka suwamindra charithaya* (1970 January) published by Sri Ñānesvara *visvavidyala pirivena*, Hunupitiya, Colombo.

In 1934 Dhammānanda contested for the chief priesthood at the Sri Pāda temple but his campaign was not successful until 1954¹²⁵. During this period he was engaged in two court cases; one was against the Public Trustee to legitimate his position as the chief priest of the Sri Pāda temple, and the second one was against the Vidyodaya Management Trust (*vidyadara sabhāva*) (this trust consisted of fourteen prominent lay leaders such as D.S. Senanayake, D.B Jayatilake, G.P. Malalasekere etc.) for rejecting his application for the post of Principal of Vidyodaya as he wanted to be the successor to his teacher, Mahagoda Ñānesvara. On this controversial issue, his relationship with Vidyodaya had not been harmonious. In 1933 he lost his case against the Vidyodaya Management Trust but subsequently appealed to the High Court against that judgement. However, he lost this case again in 1954 but he did win the case of the Sri Pāda chief priesthood and its Trusteeship, in a separate judgment that year.

After the earlier court decision Dhammānanda had to move from the Vidyodaya where he had resided until then. At this point he was supported by some prominent lay Buddhists with whom he was closely associated. Among them were Barnes Ratwatte¹²⁶, father-in-law of S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, who became the champion of the postcolonial ‘Sinhala-Buddhist regeneration project’, D.C Wijewardene, who later became Trustee of the Sri Pāda temple and Dhanapala Attygalle¹²⁷. Ratwatte, as the Deputy Trustee of the Public Trustee Department, allocated Rs.180,000 from the Sri Pāda Temple fund to buy an ‘official residence’¹²⁸ (*nila āramaya*) for Dhammānanda where he lived as the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple until his death in

¹²⁵ In this election some of his colleagues at Vidyodaya supported his opponent, Urapola Ratanajothi.

¹²⁶ He is the son-in-law of S. D. Mahawelatanna of Sabaragamuva who supported Dhammananda’s teacher Mahagoda Ñānesvara in his election for the chief priesthood of the Sri Pāda temple.

¹²⁷ He was the chairman of Ratnapura Urban Council and later became the Member of Parliament for Ratnapura electorate.

¹²⁸ He bought a house from a Tamil gentleman at Park Road in Colombo 7 and this house is still used by the present chief monk whenever he visits Colombo. Dhammananda not only brought an official residence under the name of Sri Pāda chief priesthood but also an official car and a substantial amount of monthly payment for the incumbency. All these arrangements show how Dhammananda effectively remade the powerful and privileged Sri Pāda chief priesthood, which had lost its importance during the management of the Sabaragamuva elites under the colonial regime. Today the monks who hold the Sri Pāda chief priesthood enjoy more privileges than Dhammananda himself enjoyed during his tenure.

1970. This event marked the completion of Dhammānanda's break with the Vidyodaya monastic college and its ideological position which, according to Seneviratne, produced the sober 'pragmatic' or 'rural development' monks.

4.4 Other Catalysts of the Reordering

Ironically, Dhammanada became much closer to the ideological position of his close ally D.C. Wijewardene (1893-1956), whose writings and activities were similar to the 'nationalist' monks of Vidyānāṅkara, most notably Yakkaduve Pragnasara, principal of Vidyānāṅkara Pirivena, whose controversial work was popularly known as *The Declaration of the Vidyānāṅkara Pirivena* (1946), and Walpola Rāhula, who wrote *The Heritage of the Bhikkhu* (1946), a work Seneviratne claims "influenced the monkhood more than any other in the recent history of Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism" (1999:135). D.C. Wijewardene's 'nationalist' position is reflected in his work *Dharma-Vijaya, or The Revolt in the Temple* which was written in 1953. Before examining his works let me briefly explain his personal life. Don Charles Wijewardene was one of seven sons born to Muhandiram Don Philip Wijewardene, who made his fortune in the latter part of the nineteenth century as a merchant of timber, bricks, and river sand for the construction of buildings in Colombo, and the breakwater in the port of Colombo. D.C. Wijewardene's mother, Helena, was the daughter of Arnolis Dep, a prosperous arrack renter of the late nineteenth century. The liquor trade laid the foundation for later Buddhist piety. She contributed liberally to the restoration of the temple at Kelaniya, Raja Maha Vihāra, the site of important religious and political activity in postcolonial Sri Lanka. D.C.'s brother, Don Richard, became Ceylon's most important newspaper magnate, and his Lake House company published, among others, the *Daily News* in English and the *Dinamina* in Sinhala which long gave the Wijewardenes virtual control of the Sri Lankan Press. D.C. did not become a public figure of similar to Don Richard, but he maintained the paternal interest in the Kelaniya temple and in Buddhist affairs, together with another brother, Don Walter, (cf. Tambiah 1992: 38). After the death of his brother, Don Walter in 1939, D.C. became the president of the lay Trustee organization (*Dāyaka Sabhāva*) in the Kelaniya temple through which his wife, Vimala Wijewardene also became an active participant of temple affairs. In 1946 D.C. edited a beautiful little

pamphlet entitled *Here is Kelaniya* (also in Sinhala: *Menna Kelaniya*). Published in large numbers in both languages, the text is lavishly illustrated with drawings and photographs and contains articles about Kelaniya's 'history', 'legends', art and architecture (Walters 1996: 99-100). This is all fused with extracts from Wijewardene's forthcoming masterpiece, *The Revolt in the Temple*, which no doubt has been widely influential in right-wing Sinhala nationalist circles.

D.C. served as a member of the Buddhist Committee of Inquiry, which was set up in 1954 by a resolution passed by the All Ceylon Buddhist Congress at its thirty-third annual conference held in 1953. The committee's brief was 'to inquire into the present state of Buddhism in Ceylon and to report on the conditions necessary to improve and strengthen the position of Buddhism, and the means whereby those conditions may be fulfilled' (Tambiah 1992: 22). The report of the committee was published in 1956 under the title of *The Betrayal of Buddhism*. Without doubt D. C.'s *The Revolt in the Temple* reflects some themes and assertions found in the report. As Tambiah (1992) points out, D.C. asserts the strongly nationalist position that the island was primordially destined as a land that united Buddhism with the Sinhalese nation. And his nationalist thesis is contained in this synoptic historical sketch, directly quoted in Tambiah's book:

Throughout their history, the stimulus to action, for the Sinhalese, was the ideology that they were a nation brought into being for the definite purpose of carrying, "for full five thousand years", the torch lit by the "Guide of the World" twenty-five centuries ago; and the structure of Sinhalese society has been shaped in pursuance of this ideology. Buddhism was the State Religion. The Chosen king was always a Buddhist, and the people supported him with wholehearted loyalty, because he, as the chief citizen of the country, was the leader in shaping and sustaining their ideology, and the protector of the national faith. The temple became the centre from which radiated learning, arts, and culture. The Sangha were the guides of the king's conscience and the mentors of the people, whose joys they shared and whose sorrows they assuaged (1954: 513, cf. 1992 38-39).

D.C. Wijewardene argues that the supremacy of Buddhism as the state religion, maintained and guaranteed by kingship, is the premise which legitimated the Buddhist nationalist “historical” assertion that the religion went into decline under colonial rule and must be restored to its former position. And also, the Sangha (monkhood) had always throughout the island’s history, played a ‘political’ role in order to ensure the peace, prosperity, and welfare of the country. *The Revolt in the Temple* is relevant not because of its originality, but because it repeats themes already articulated by Walpola Rāhula and other activist monks. Wijewardene is an example of the wealthy educated Buddhist layman who championed the cause of Buddhist restoration.

D.C. Wijewardene’s ideological position is strikingly important here because he was the main architect behind Dhammānanda’s ‘reordering’ project at Sri Pāda temple, which inaugurated the ‘Buddhicization’ of the extremely important sacred footprint site. In 1954, Dhammānanda appointed D.C. as the first Trustee of Sri Pāda temple under him. And D.C. firstly helped Dhammānanda to reconstitute those ‘official’ daily ritual practices at Sri Pāda temple, identical to ‘the daily rituals at Kelaniya temple’ which were most probably ‘(re) invented’ in the “Kelaniya restoration project” after 1927 (see Walters 1996: 94-107). He was also involved in the (re)construction of the internal administrative and service staff of the temple, but died in 1956, before the completion of that project. Dhammānanda finished the rest of the project together with another loyal lay Buddhist, Dhanapala Attyagalle. The ‘reordering’ project undertaken by Dhammānanda was not simply a ‘nationalist’ one, but was also a project that overthrew the authority of the previous lay temple Trustees who predominantly came from the landed families of the highest stratum of the Sabaragamuva goyigama caste, the *radala*. In general, as Spencer correctly points out, the power of those families, particularly in Meda Korale, began to be challenged only by the advent of mass politics, not a more direct challenge from an emergent trade or capital-based class, as was mounted in the Low Country (1986: 83). After the mid 1950s the influence of the Sabaragamuva elite families on Sri Pāda temple affairs seemed to completely die out.

4.5 Político-Religious Movements prior to the Reordering

At the national level, a similar transformation took place at this historical juncture from which a coalition of Sinhala nationalist-cum-Marxists won the power under S.W.R.D Bandaranaike¹²⁹ in 1956 by overthrowing the United National Party (UNP) that had ruled the country for the first eight years of Independence. The UNP under Prime Minister D.S. Senanayake attempted to create a secular, Western-oriented capitalist state, and denied the acceptance of Buddhism as the state religion (Smith 1966: 456-457). But this policy alienated the UNP from the majority of Sinhala Buddhists, and led to their dazzling defeat in the 1956 election. In general, scholars have identified the rise of Bandaranaike's political movement in 1956 as the second turning point in the country's political landscape after 1931 (Wriggins 1960; Peiris 1958). The alliance that came into power in 1956 was viewed as a victory for Sinhala Buddhist communal populism over the Western-oriented political elite who had been much more privileged under the British colonial regime.

According to Tambiah (1992) and others (e.g., Wriggins 1960; Smith 1966) the year 1956 was historic, because it saw the political success of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, which had remained latent for some time and began to gain momentum in the early fifties. More immediately, the year 1956 was also one of great expectations of the world Buddhist community specially, to Sinhala Buddhist because it would be the time for celebrating of Buddha *Jayanthi* to mark the 2500 years since the death of the Buddha, which was also corroborated with the landing of Vijaya, the legendary father of the Sinhala race, together with his band of followers, in Sri Lanka. As the Buddha Jayanthi approached, the monks, lay leaders and the government responded by promoting various religious activities such as translations into Sinhala of the sacred books (*Tipitaka*), the beginning of a Buddhist encyclopaedia, and restoration of Buddhist sacred sites (Wriggins 1960: 173-174). Such activities, Wriggins comments, 'provided an impetus toward Buddhist solidarity and collective effort unusual in the recent Buddhist past' (1960:174).

¹²⁹ Bandaranaike was an Oxford-educated politician who came from one of wealthiest goiygama elite families in Low country and married Sirima Ratwatte, daughter of Barnes Ratwatte of the landed elite family or *radala* in Sabaragamuwa.

In such an enthusiastic context Dhammānanda began the 'restoration' work, more precisely the project of 'reordering' Sri Pāda temple. Parallel to the 'reordering' project, Dhammānanda and D.C. Wijewardene organized a large festival at Sri Pāda to commemorate the Buddha Jayanthi, that was supported by Bandaranaike's new government, as they supported such celebrations at the other Buddhist sacred sites in the island. A prince of the Nepalese royal family was the chief guest of this grand celebration and the Health Minister, Wimala Wijewardene¹³⁰, the wife of D.C. Wijewardana represented the government¹³¹. In addition to that celebration the fund was established to print the Sinhala version of the seven volumes of *Tipitaka* or Buddhist doctrinal text from Sri Pāda Temple Fund.¹³²

Before all these things happened, Bandaranaike's political opponent, Sir John Kotalawe, who had become the Prime Minister and the leader of the UNP after the death of D.S. Senanayake, carried out a project to supply electricity to Sri Pāda temple. The first phase of the project was ceremonially opened in 1950. Electricity came to Sri Pāda not as a direct involvement of government in Sri Pāda temple development affairs, but as the fulfilment of a vow made to the guardian deity of the temple on the successful completion of the first hydro power project in the country¹³³. But its second phase became political, because the electricity supply to the Ratnapura pilgrims' path was set up the eve of the crucial election in 1956. This project was opposed by Kotalawe's political opponents as they accused him of

¹³⁰ The first woman, to become a Minister in the government of Sri Lanka.

¹³¹ Administrative Report of the Public Trustee in 1955. This event was also marked by planting a Bo Tree at the foothill of the sacred mountain (Lankadeepa 5th January 1956).

¹³² D.C. Wijewardene also had a plan to build a monastic collage (*Bhikkhu viduhalak*) from the Sri Pāda temple Fund (Lankadeepa 19th Dec.1954).

¹³³ This vow was made in 1947 by then the minister of Transport & Public work, Sir John Kotalawe. One writer reports this occasion 'the inauguration of the Lighting Scheme was fixed for the full-moon day of Saturday, March, 4th 1950. And in the evening of that day Sir John Kotalawe, at the head of a great procession composed of officials and prominent notabilities and in the presence of a large assembly of the Sangha representing the various Nikayas, solemnly unveiled the huge Makara Torana [stone archway of dragon] giving entrance to the ascent of the Peak. After the unveiling of the Makara Torana, Sir John, leading a mighty procession of pilgrims, led the ascent up the Pilgrims Path, and on reaching the summit of the Peak, inaugurated the great Festival of Lights..' (Senaveratne, J. M. 1950: 41). In 1956 Ratnapura pilgrimage path was given lights (Daily News, 26 March 1956).

using it for political advantage.¹³⁴ Just few months before the 1956 general election (on 25th March 1956) the electricity project was declared open by Kotelawe's brother, Senator Justin Kotelawe. Although Dhammānanda and D.C. Wijewardene were invited, they did not attend this grandiose ceremony¹³⁵, because, they were both engaged with the Bandaranaike-led 'nationalist project'. The decision of Kotelawe to hold the election on the eve of the Buddha Jayanthi was emphatically opposed by Bandaranaike's campaigners, particularly Buddhist monks. They staged demonstrations with the slogan "No elections before Jayanthi". A fast by 250 monks at the doors of Parliament clearly indicated their seriousness, and throughout the campaign Prime Minister Kotelawe was symbolically depicted as the enemy of Buddhist interests (Tambiah 1992: 44).

4.6 Reform movements against the Buddhist Establishment

Let me now move from political contestation to explain another important religious or ideological 'reform' movement which flourished briefly between 1948 and 1956, and is worthy of note here because it had some impact on Sri Pāda temple affairs, and mostly on the whole monk community in Sri Lanka. My brief discussion on one particular movement is heavily dependent on Michael Carrithers' *The Forest Monks of Sri Lanka* (1983) where he lucidly explains its origin, continuity and decline as a part of his description of a larger reform movement in modern Sri Lanka which is based on the re-creation of what is held to be traditional ascetic practice. The movement I am concerned with was organized and popularised by the self-ordained monks, popularly known as 'Tāpasayo', or ascetic monks who were highly critical of established monasticism on the grounds of luxurious living and the moral decadence of monks and their monastic practice. In January 1948, they began publishing a magazine, called *Sāsana Parihāniya* ('Decline of Buddhism'), but subsequently (in 1949) that name was changed to *Sāsana Araksava* ('Protection of the Buddhist Religion'). The magazine was their main populist weapon against the monastic

¹³⁴ On 5th April Daily News reports "Dhanayake opposed Lighting of Sri Pāda"

¹³⁵ Daily News 26th March 1956 reports the event and its festivity '...Senator Justin Kotelawe and party were conducted in procession by *Sesath* bearers, Kandyan dancers and drummers up the peak...'

monks and their contemporary living and practices, and their other objective was tireless public preaching. (Carrithers 1983: 104-136).

As the Buddha Jayanti approached, the activities and propaganda of the *Tāpasaya* movement increased. In contrast the anti-*tāpasaya* press began to claim that the movement was a Christian plot to undermine Buddhism at this crucial point in its history (ibid.)¹³⁶. The anti-Christian tone was taken from the rising Buddhist nationalism of the time, as was the anti-Tamil propagandist project. However, the *Tāpasaya* as figured prominently in the Sinhala press between 1952 and 1954, and attracted considerable support, but according to Carrithers, *tāpasa* movement fell apart as a result of the deep and often bitter division between the *tāpasaya* and their supporters on the one hand, and the monastic monks and their own supporters on the other (ibid.).

In 1954 a group of *tāpasayo* and their lay supporters were involved in two confrontations at two different nationally important Buddhist pilgrimage sites, namely at the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy and at the Sri Pāda Temple. According to Carrithers, these two confrontations, particularly the Kandy one, played a significant part in the demise of the *tāpasa* movement (ibid.). At Kandy they had a heated argument with the officiate monk and went on to say that ‘the Temple should not be such a centre of corruption- a very great amount of money is collected in the ‘merit boxes’ (*pin petti*) that it should be forcibly opened to the truly faithful’ (ibid.). At Sri Pāda Temple a similar incident occurred and *tāpasayo*, threw the merit box off the top of the peak, saying, ‘the Buddha has no use for this kind of thing’. And a *tāpasaya* had spoken in an ‘unbefitting manner’ to the monk in charge.¹³⁷ Apparently this monk had made an announcement over his loudspeaker to the crowd: ‘Don’t believe in these people who have taken the robe without a teacher. There are thugs among these *tāpasayo* who have been in prison, who have committed robberies, who are drunkards. They might even steal your own belongings. This courtyard of the

¹³⁶ Also see *Dinamina* 9th, 13th and 26th February 1954. *Sinhala Bauddhaya* virulently anti-*tāpasaya* paper, had printed several articles deploring the *tāpasayo* in general in 1954.

¹³⁷ This confrontation surfaced when I was interviewing this monk and he said “I chased them away” and he labelled the *tāpasayo* as ‘alcoholics, thugs and thieves’.

holy footprint is no place for their doings. Why don't police act to expel them?'(ibid.). As Carrithers reports the Kandyan monks of the Malvatta and Asgiriya chapters used their connections with the government to suppress the movement and by 1956 the newspapers began to report constantly that *tāpasayo* had been arrested, fingerprinted, questioned, and even brought to trial (ibid.). I am sure Dhammānanda used his political connection with the new government to avenge what the *tāpasayo* had done at Sri Pāda temple under his occupancy. The failure of the *tāpasa* movement, for Carrithers, signifies that 'momentary enthusiasm is no substitute for training' (1983:126).

Whatever the reason behind the failure of this movement, in my view the movement did not emerge in isolation; there were similar 'purification' movements at this point to reform the monastic order of the Buddhist monk. One such important movement was the Vinayavardhana movement which advocated a strict return to vinaya, the code of monastic discipline¹³⁸. This movement came into prominence in the 1950s, also as a result of laity critiques of the monkhood, particularly on the ground of their luxurious living and moral decadence. It advocated and effected among its supporters an avoidance of monks, where necessary using laymen instead. The Vinayavardhana wished to restrict all monks to isolated hermitages like *tāpasayo*. Because, as Michael Ames points out, Vinayavardhana claimed that all ordained monks were corrupt and heretical and that they have corrupted the doctrine and the laity as well. Monastic landlordism, elaborate temple rituals, the "useless" propitiation of spirits within temple precincts, and the worship of Buddha images clearly showed the degradation of Buddhists. They should return to the pristine purity of the Buddha's doctrine, which is complete and sufficient (cf: 1963: 52). The Vinayavardhana movement attempted not only to eliminate monastic 'corruption' but also to 'free' Buddhists from ritualism. According to Seneviratne, the roots of the movement lie in the work of Anagarika Dharmapala, and it challenged the conception of the monastic vocation as advocated by the Vidyānāth monks (1999: 284). Also, it had parallels with the development of a movement that advocated the life in forest hermitages for

¹³⁸ Ibid.

the determined pursuit of liberation (see Carrithers 1983). These reformist and counter reformist movements that appeared at this postcolonial moment need to be understood as a 'fundamentalist' response to the 'shape' of the emerging 'new Buddhism', 'language' and 'culture' of Sinhala Buddhist majority of Sri Lanka. So far I have attempted to excavate a politico-cultural momentum in which the postcolonial Sri Pāda temple shifted from a 'sacred site' to 'Buddhist site'.

4.7 Waning of Hindu Practices at Sri Pāda

Interestingly, this shift has some historical parallel to what Gombrich & Obeyesekere (1988) describe on the taking over of Kataragama, which was predominantly a Hindu Tamil pilgrimage site by the Buddhists in middle of the twentieth century. They have recorded how the resident Hindu priests of particular site (Sella Kataragama), assisted by powerful Hindu organizations, resisted and filed an action in the courts, claiming the rights of trusteeship but they failed to stop the take over (1988:187). However, according to Gombrich & Obeyesekere Sinhala control of the local institutions is not (at least, not yet) complete. Tamils still control some of the shrines, especially those near the main shrine. But the highly visible Hindu practices at the shrine such as firewalking and *kavadi* dance were dramatically taken over by the group of Sinhala Buddhist *Sāmis* (priests) (1988:182-189).

Unlike Sri Pāda, another striking feature of the Buddhization at Kataragama, according to Obeyesekere (1992) is the 'invention' of a series of Buddhist myths through which a once Buddhist deity (Kataragama); a Tamil god (Murukan); and a Sanskritic deity (Skanda) transformed into a more or less an exclusively Sinhala god after the middle of the twentieth century. The new myths are both hegemonic, and also a defensive reaction against the Sinhala perceptions of Tamil hegemonic claims to the sacred site (ibid. 219-233).

Let me now explain a similar process with particular differences that occurred at around the same historical juncture at Sri Pāda. In the mid 1950's a Tamil Hindu ritual practice oriented to the God Siva to whom Tamil Hindus believe that the sacred footprint at the temple belongs, begun to fade from Sri Pāda. Surprisingly, the historical origin of this particular Hindu practice at Sri Pāda is very ambiguous in its

orientation. However, the ritual engagement of Hindu mendicants at Sri Pāda can be traced back to the period of the Tamil king of Ariya Chakkrawarti in the fourteenth century or even before (see Appendix II). For surely, during the period of late sixteenth century to mid eighteenth century a group of Hindu Tamil mendicants, popularly known as *āndiya* controlled the Sri Pāda temple until it was taken over under the Saranamkara-Kriti Sri reordering project at the Temple and handed over to Buddhist monks.

A similar kind of group of Tamil Hindu mendicants used to perform a special annual *pūjā* oriented to the God Siva on a special day of *Mahasivarātri*¹³⁹, in the month of March at Sri Pāda temple. This ritual can be identified as the making of their mythical claim on the sacred footprint as the God Siva into practice. The large numbers of Tamil Hindu pilgrims who mainly came from the Colombo area used to participate in the main annual ceremony of the Hindus at Sri Pāda. This special event was popularly known as the 'Cochin Pōya day' among the ex-temple staff of Sri Pāda Temple. The name 'Cochin' specified that the majority of the Tamil Hindus who visited to the Temple on the day largely consisted of the immigrants' trading community from the region of Kerala in South India. The Tamil religious leaders who performed special *pūjā* at Sri Pāda were generally known as *sāmi* ('lord') and some of these *sāmis* resided permanently at the place called '*sāmi madama*' of the northern foot hill of the sacred mountain where they built a small temple for God Siva. However, for the special *pūjā* on the Day of Maha Siva was conducted by the senior *sāmi* who came from a main temple in Colombo. Until the early 1930's the *sāmi* had no problem taking away the offerings made at the footprint shrine on this special day by the Hindu pilgrims¹⁴⁰. But the practice was stopped by the newly appointed Temple trustee in 1936. However, the chief *sāmi* known as Ramanathan *Sāmi* made an appeal to the Public Trustee on the issue but his appeal was

¹³⁹ J. Bruce Long (1982) provides a substantial account on this festival in South India.

¹⁴⁰ According to a letter written by a temple servant to the Trustee of the Temple on 7th March 1932; A *sāmi*, S. Ramanatha had performed the *pūja* at Sri Pāda and the value of the offering on the day was Rs. 143.57 and the value of the personal offering given to the *sāmi* for his ritual service by the Hindu pilgrims was Rs.47.85. And Ramanatha *sāmi* had given a gift (quarter sovereign of gold) to the Trustee (SLNA 37/985).

unanimously rejected¹⁴¹. It appears that although the *sāmi* or his fellow *sāmis* lost their share for the ritual service, they continued their annual ritual service at Sri Pāda until the beginning of the Dhammānanda's Sri Pāda reordering project in the mid 1950's.

As I explained before, this period coincided with the emerging political dominance of Sinhala Buddhists and strong resentment against Tamil Hindus. Thus under the Dhammānanda's project the special *pūjā* held by Hindu *sāmis* was brought to a standstill and their small temple at the foot of the sacred mountain was taken over by a Buddhist monk.¹⁴² The violence against the Tamils around this period would have been a further reason for them not being present at Sri Pāda temple on this religiously important day for the Hindu pilgrims. During my fieldwork, I never come across such a ritual taking place at the Sri Pāda temple. Not surprisingly, according to one of my Tamil informants, the presence of the Tamil Hindu *sāmis* in the Sri Pāda Temple area had completely died out by the early 1960's¹⁴³. This example clearly shows how non-Buddhist participation has been eroded in the ritual practices at the temple site under the hegemonic reordering project of the Dhammānanda. I suspect that the Muslim and even Catholic participation was stopped long before this.

4.8 Fading of Muslims and Christian Connections

Muslim participation at Sri Pāda can be traced back to 12th and 13th centuries and even before (see **Appendix II**), and although there were certain political setbacks

¹⁴¹ Administrative Report of Public Trustee in 1937.

¹⁴² Interview with the ex-executive monk at Sri Pāda temple on 30th September and 20th October 2001 in which he claimed that he took over the temple of the *sāmis* which is popularly known as *Sāmi Madama*. Today, this place is run by a Buddhist monk, and part of it has given over to commercial purposes.

¹⁴³ Personal communication with S.Sivanandi (66) on 20th Dec.2000 and 24th August 2002. According to Sivanandi in the morning of the Mahasivarathri Day, one *Sāmi* (Bala *Sāmi*) was stationed at the Seethagangula where the Hindu pilgrims used to have 'sacred bath'. Before the sacred bath the *Sāmi* performed a purification ritual in which each pilgrim was given a piece of banana leaf with a handful of white rice and a coin for putting on their head. With those auspicious objects pilgrims had to take a bath and together with their wet cloth they used to climb the scared mountain. Today such ritual performances at Sri Pāda are not visible. According to Sivanandi under the 1964 repatriation pact, few *sāmis* of this place returned to India.

which occurred during the colonial regimes, their presence at Sri Pāda as 'worshippers' has been quite prominent until recently. However, as I explain in a moment their presence in the postcolonial Sri Pāda has become unimportant due to Sinhala Buddhicization of the sacred footprint site. As a partial response to that hegemonic process, Muslims began to remake their own 'sacred site' to counter their marginalization from the 'sacred footprint site' where they have historically been connected¹⁴⁴. Let me put it into this way, Muslims do not ritually maintain any connection with today's Sri Pāda, however as I noticed small number of mainly young Muslim do visit to there to 'see' the place but not surely for the worshipping. This is further revealed in the statement made by the Mosque priest (*maulavi*), Faleel (44) at the popular Mosque in the city of Colombo, popular known as *Davataghaha palliya*: 'We don't pray at Adam's Peak but we believe it to be the sacred footprint of Adam hence we respect it and visit it to see, but our visiting Adam's Peak doesn't count as a sacred journey like Mecca'. Similarly, a Muslim priest [Lebbe] (65) of a village mosque from Kahattagasdigiliya in the North Central Province said to me somewhat disappointed manner 'we' (Muslim) don't pray here as we do in our Mosque because we don't have facilities here, particularly to clean ourselves and the freedom [he refers here a space to pray] as in a Mosque. What we basically do here is put a coin onto the footprint and express our gratitude to Adam by saying '*wasalam mali kum*' but I don't see many Muslim come here to do that"¹⁴⁵.

In my view, this dispossession of the Muslim cult from the Buddhicized Sri Pāda has laid them to make their own pilgrimage sites in the region. The popularity of Muslim pilgrimage sites like Dafther Jailany at Kuragala in Balangoda of the Sabaragamuwa

¹⁴⁴ Just before the 1915 riot began against Muslims, the propagandists or "street preachers" particularly monks used the popular pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda to active against Muslims and in particular moment local Moors found a speech of "street preacher" was "offensive" and "scurrilous" and he had in his possession pamphlets in verse form printed at [Anagarika] Dharmapala's printing press (Thanie 1915: 251 cf. Roberts 1994: 199). Since then, I am sure such antagonism would adversely affected to the absent of Muslims pilgrims to Sri Pāda.

¹⁴⁵ The rise of Islamic 'fundamentalism' in Sri Lanka might have, also, discouraged worship at Sri Pāda. However, the accent of late nineteenth century Islamic revivalism was not so much on religion but on modernising the Muslims and giving the community a distinct identity in an increasingly communal Sri Lanka but in the 1980s Islamisation stemmed from the ethnic conflict with militant Tamil nationalism and the example of the Iranian revolution. The adoption of Arab culture, especially in dress, and also a strict avoidance of music, dance, art and drama, especially in the case of girls and women was the main feature of this process. For a fruitful discussion of the rise of an Arab Islamic identity among Sri Lankan Muslims in the 20th century (see MacGilvray 1999: 307-357).

province should be understood in this context. Dafther Jailany was a historical site for the Sri Lankan Muslims where they considered the site as an important resting place for the Muslim saints and traders who had visited to Sri Pāda before the occupation of the coastal areas of the island by the Portuguese and the Dutch. Muslims believe that the saint Seyd-Us-Sheik Muhiyadeen Abdul Qadair Jailany prayed and meditated at the rock cave at Kuragala during his pilgrimage to the site of the sacred footprint of Adam (Aboosally 2002: 57-65). However, this place was rediscovered in the latter part of the nineteenth century, but it has begun to attract large number of [Sunni] Muslims pilgrims by the middle of the twentieth century. According to Aboosally from 1960, the Muslims of Galle, Aluthgama and Dharga town associated themselves with the Mosque Committee and took part in the annual feast and gradually as the flow of pilgrims increased (ibid. 92). Today this site has become one of the main pilgrimage sites for the country's Muslims (see McGilvray 2002), who have willingly or unwillingly disconnected with the Temple of the sacred footprint.

Unlike Muslims, it is hard to find out the exact historical juncture where Sri Lankan Catholics began to disassociate with the sacred footprint shrine on which they are historically connected through myths of Adam and Saint Thomas (see **Appendix III**). The Catholics pilgrimage to the sacred footprint site began, at the time of Catholicism was introduced into Sri Lanka by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. As long as the Portuguese were the dominant power along the Sri Lankan littoral, Catholicism was the privileged religion in areas under their control. When the Portuguese were replaced by the Dutch, Catholics became subject to Protestant persecution, which ended only with the advent of British rule at the end of eighteenth century. During the British period, missionary priests from France and elsewhere consolidated the Catholic community, creating a strong sense of identity, partly through the encouragement of pilgrimage (Stirrat 1991:122). Surely not to the sacred footprint shrine but empathetically encouraged to go on pilgrimage to particular churches which latter became popular centres for pilgrimage of Sri Lankan Catholic. According to Stirrat in the turn of the twentieth century two shrines, those of St Anne at Talawila and of Our Lady at Madhu became per-eminent sacred sites for Catholic pilgrims (see Stirrat 1982). By the 1930s, Madhu had overtaken Talawila in

popularity, and through the thirties and forties it was claimed that up to 250,000 pilgrims were attending the various feasts in honour of Our Lady but the absolute number of pilgrims appears to have continued to grow at both shrines until the 1980's. The numbers at Madhu, however, have fallen since early 1980's with increase in conflict between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil Tiger militant for, given the location of Madhu, people are afraid to go on pilgrimage there. Also the splits between Tamil and Sinhala Catholics have further reduced the number of Sinhala Catholics visiting the shrine (1991:124-127). Stirrat reports that Sinhala Catholics have now shifted their devotional interest from those of 'older' place specific pilgrimage sites to the new person-centred cults, which have emerged of the holy men [or radical Catholic priests] around whom these new shrines revolve, particularly after 1970's (1992:58-77).

With taking into consideration of the out line history about the Catholic pilgrimage in Sri Lanka, I can only speculate that the advent of separate pilgrimage sites for the Catholic pilgrims, might be one obvious reason for declining Catholics pilgrims to Sri Pāda. Also attempt to 'cleanse' Sri Lankan Catholicism of Buddhist influences by the European missionaries, [many of them French members of the Oblate mission] in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century may have discouraged the pilgrimage other than to Catholics sites. Similarly, I suspect that as with Muslims and Hindus, the resurgence of Sinhala-Buddhist nationalism in the fifties and sixties would have further confined to the Catholic pilgrims to their own pilgrimage sites. As Stirrat has correctly pointed out Bandaranaike's victory in the 1956 election marked the end of the Church as an effective force in Sri Lankan political life, after 1956, the catholic population of Sri Lanka found itself under increasing attack (1992: 39-42). And after a series of political defeats, most notably the takeover of church schools by the government in 1960, the church withdrew from politics. A number of measures were eventually taken which were seen as attacking the Catholic community such as 'expelling foreign missionaries' and restricting to enter new, removal of nuns from the state hospitals, purging Catholics from the armed services and other sectors of the civil service and the press (ibid.).

No doubt such religiously motivated antagonism against the Catholic population in Sri Lanka would have adversely affected to further 'alter' their 'historical' connection with the 'Adam's Peak'. Today, Sri Pāda is no more a pilgrimage site where Catholics [or Christian] pilgrims can religiously express a sense of Catholic identity. During my field-work at Sri Pāda Temple I never come a cross Catholic form of worship being taken place at the sacred footprint shrine. Hence, I can only note here, that the Sri Lankan Catholics nor Christians do not seem to religiously associate with the today's Sri Pāda. Even recently, the mythical claim of the sacred footprint site has publicly rejected by the Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo, Oswald Gomis through a press report where he says, "The Roman Catholics in Sri Lanka do not make any religious claim to the foot-print on Adam's Peak. I do not know who proclaimed that it was the foot-print of Adam. These are all just traditional legends that have come down through the ages"¹⁴⁶ This kind of assertion is clearly marked the unwillingness to associate or share (even in mythical realm) with the highly Buddhicized sacred footprint site.

Today we don't see a sacred site where diverse non-Buddhist religious practices are being publicly held and openly accommodated instead we see highly Buddhicized sacred space in which the large numbers of diverse Buddhist pilgrims parties are contested and expressed their Buddhist identity in different manners. The Sinhala Buddhization of the internal affairs of Sri Pāda Temple particularly in the 'official' rituals sphere led to alienate the non-Buddhist. This was further exacerbated by the increasing political tensions between Sinhala and other ethnic groups¹⁴⁷ particularly with Tamils. Today pilgrims of non-Buddhist religious groups have become onlookers on 'the sacred footprint' rather the active participant of their own ritual practices at the sacred site which have been performed until recently there. By

¹⁴⁶ The Sunday Times, 03 Oct. 1993.

¹⁴⁷ Religiously motivated violence were began to visible late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (for example; Christian groups against Buddhist and Buddhist groups against Christian and in 1915 famous Muslim and Buddhist riots) but by middle of this century those violence took the form of ethnically motivated stance (e.g. 1958, 1977 and 1983, Sinhala against Tamil) (see Spencer 1990b).

1950's onwards Sri Pāda temple had become a 'sacred site' almost exclusively for Sinhala Buddhist practices¹⁴⁸.

After Dhammānanda, no matter who has been the chief priest of the Sri Pāda temple, the Buddhization of the 'sacred footprint site' has been the centrally visible project in the 'official' discursive practice at the temple. This point will be readdressed at the end of this chapter. I now turn to explain the projects that took place during and after Dhammānanda's Sri Pāda reordering project. I would like to analyse these projects under three main themes, namely the physical or architectural project, the administrative and ritual projects. But I will not discuss the 'official' ritual project here, but return to it in the next chapter. Let me first start with the physical project.

4.9 The Reordering in Practice: *The Physical Domain of the Temple*

Sri Pāda Temple has a relatively unimposing architectural structure which is compactly built in a narrow plateau on the top of the cone shaped sacred mountain. The present temple structure is not "ancient" in any sense. Until the mid 1930s the main wooden shrine of the footprint followed some form of Kandyan architectural model. Instead, today we see sets of "modern" structures, mostly built after the 1950s. However, during Dhammānanda's period (1954-1970) the physical structure of the temple had not changed much,¹⁴⁹ but he laid the foundation for what followed by starting the 'Building Development Fund of Sri Pāda Temple' (*Sripadastāna godanāgili sanvardhana aramudala*) to which pilgrims donate money for 'Temple development'. Today this Fund has become the second largest source of income received by the temple authorities from the pilgrims¹⁵⁰. These funds, especially

¹⁴⁸ Interestingly, however there is a group of Hindu Tamil who live and work in the neighbouring plantation estates around Sri Pāda connect both economically and religiously to the temple but this Hindu Tamil element is subordinate to the highly Buddhized element (see Appendix VI).

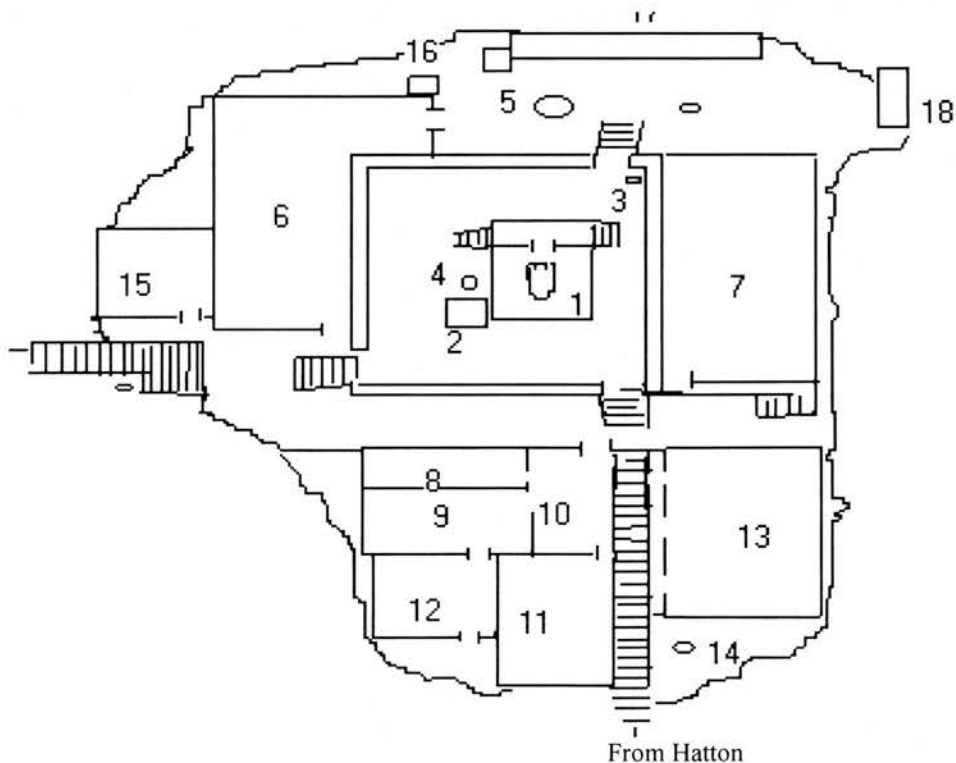
¹⁴⁹ But he provided basic facilities such as water, toilets, reconstruction of stone steps along the pilgrim's paths etc.

¹⁵⁰ Generally temple's Funds are under the control of the government department call Public Trustee but recently management of those funds came under the Buddhist Commissioner' Department and under that several regional offices have created; Sri Pāda funds are managed by the Ratnapura Regional Office of the Buddhist Commissioner' Department but those funds are actually control by the chief monk and his Trustee of the respective temple. Taking and spending money from those funds

during the period of Batugedara Yasassi (1970-1986) and Handapāngoda Wimala (1986-) have been central to the growing ‘Buddhicization’ of the sacred site.

Let me explain the contemporary ‘Buddhicized physical domain’ of the Temple in some detail. The temple area (see **figure 4.1**) is generally called ‘*maluwa*’ (the courtyard of the footprint) or ‘*uda maluwa*’ (the upper courtyard) and is a modest set of shrine houses. The recently laid terrazzo is a narrowed compact courtyard (about 60x40 feet), enclosed by a stone wall with two main entrances on the north side and the south side. Pilgrims from the southern pilgrims’ path (Ratnapura) use the south entrance, and the north entrance is used by the pilgrims come from the northern path (Hatton). Inside the courtyard, at the centre, a rectangular shrine (*ransivige*, lit. golden roofed house) surrounds the sacred footprint, which stands on the upper-most level of the sacred mountain.

Figure 4.1 The Sri Pada Temple Ground Plan



are not so restricted as they appear. At Sri Pāda temple, once the temple’s development project workout the money on spending the project can be obtained without the government restriction.

1. The footprint Shrine (*ransivige*-golden canopy; *pathma*- sacred footprint)
2. The shrine of god Saman
3. Temple bell
4. Coin post (*panduru gaha*)
5. Twelfth month's lamp (*dolos maha pahana*)
6. Pilgrims' rest (Ratnapura *vishrama salava*)
7. The residence of officiate monks (up stair) and Pilgrims' rest (Hatton *vishrama salava*; down stair)
8. Donation office
9. Alms-hall (*dana salava*)
10. Manager's office
11. Stores
12. Kitchen
13. Residence of lay temple staff
14. Water taps
15. Police post
16. Water tanks
17. & 18. Toilets

Steps on the north side ascend from the terrazzo courtyard to the *ransivige* where pilgrims can worship the imprinted 'sacred foot', along with the recently placed Buddha statue facing to the west, and descend to the south side of the courtyard. On the east side of the upper courtyard, right next to the *ransivige*, is a small *devāle* or shrine of the guardian deity of the temple, Saman. *Kapuralas*, lay priests of the deity, officiate at this Saman *devāle* daily. In the south side there is a narrow space between the *ransivige* and *devāle* where the coin pole (*panduru gaha*) is placed. Close to the *devāle*, a gate leading to the uppermost terrace is kept locked. In the west side corner of the upper terrace, is a gate to descend to the lower terrace. Above the gate a large metal bell (*gantāraya*) with a small bell is placed. (The importance of the places that I have pointed out above will be discussed in the next chapter.) Though bell ringing at the temple is an 'ancient' practice, the bells we see today were donated to the temple by the owner of a metal engineering company in 1993. In the lower terrace, there is a set of condensed buildings located just below the stone wall of the upper courtyard. During the 1990s most of the old buildings were demolished in both the south and east wings of the temple to build two pilgrims' rests (*visrāma sālāvas*). Above the north pilgrims' rest, the Hatton *visrāma sālāva*, there are three rooms for the resident monks at the temple and next to that, one larger room is allocated for

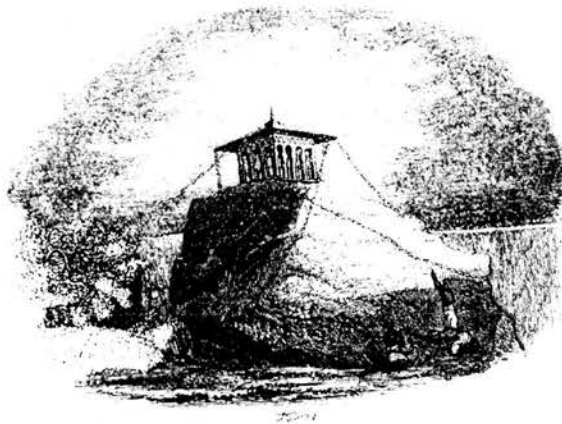
high profile lay visitors¹⁵¹, and relatives and friends of the high ranking monks of the temple administrative staff. And on the right side of that room, next to the toilet, there is a tiny triangular room, normally used for storage, where the ethnographer and his assistant were housed throughout the pilgrimage season. In the south wing, next to the south pilgrims' rest (Ratnapura *visrāma sālāva*) the *siripa maluwa* police post is located. To the east of the upper courtyard the administrative building, reconstructed with more space in the first quarter of 1980s, is sited. In the front part of that building is the donation office (*ādhara kāryālaya*) for the Temple Building Fund and the temple lay manager's office. Beside the donation office is a space for the monk's eating hall (*dāna sālāva*) and next to that a food preparation place for offering to the Buddha and the deity. In the rear of the building are the visiting monks rest room¹⁵² and the stores, and underneath the *mulutan gē* (kitchen). Most of the temple staff rooms are located in a separate building near to the north entrance where the drummers have the bottom room. In the west side of the lower courtyard, there is a ritually important place, the twelve-month lamp (*dōlosmaha pahana*), where the pilgrims offer various kinds of oil and medicinal herbs in the large brass lamp. Surprisingly, during the temple renovation programme this ritually important place was moved from the upper courtyard to its current place. Such a lamp was first offered to the temple by the king Wickrambahu of the Gampola royal court in the 15th century, but today's lamp was donated by a wealthy man from Ratnapura in 1935.

So far I have tried to explain the physical layout and changes in the temple area, as I will also show in the pictorial description (including a few 19th century pictures of the temple) in order to give the reader a sense of the temple, not as a 'multi-religious sacred site' but as monolithic Buddhist site. This is further revealed in the symbolic

¹⁵¹ During my stay in the temple I observed: District Secretary (DS), formally known as Government Agent of Ratnapura and her family and other high ranking police officers both from Ratnapura and N'Elya District and their families were housed in this room.

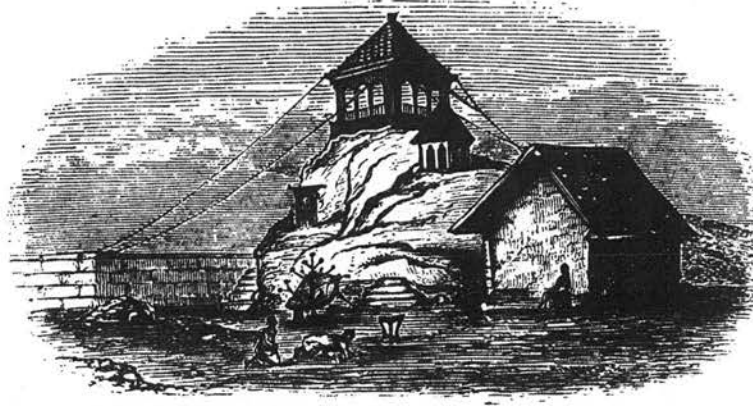
¹⁵² This room is used for multiple purposes for example; the organised arms giving for monk is usually held in this room.

language of the temple, where almost all the instructions for visitors or pilgrims are in the Sinhala language, or sometimes in English. Similarly, constant announcements on the public address system on what pilgrims should not do in the upper courtyard, were also in Sinhala only. Moreover, 'the sacred footprint' itself has been symbolically transformed into the 'Buddha's footprint' by placing a symbolic cloth copy of the Buddha's foot-print, over the sacred footprint and a similar footprint, on a copper plate, has been conspirously placed in front of the inner wall of the footprint shrine. Buddhists believe the foot of Buddha is consisted of 108 auspicious objects (*magul lakunu*). So, each of these symbolic footprints is powerfully represented such auspicious objects. Furthermore, an official decision was taken to place a new Buddha statue above the sacred footprint in 1998¹⁵³. Since mid 1950s the sacred footprint site has become more and more a Buddhist site rather than a multi-religious or multi-ethnic site. In other words, the entire temple's symbolic structure no longer reflects Buddhist and non-Buddhist interplay at the temple. This goes against its receptive and accommodative long history. Resistance to such transformation is hard to find from the non-Buddhist groups at the temple. As I mentioned before Dhammānanda's 'Temple Development Found' is key to changes that have been taken place on the physical domain of the temple. The successors of Dhamamananda given prominence on the physical project and make used of this fund for imposing a Sinhala Buddhist stamp on the whole sacred space.

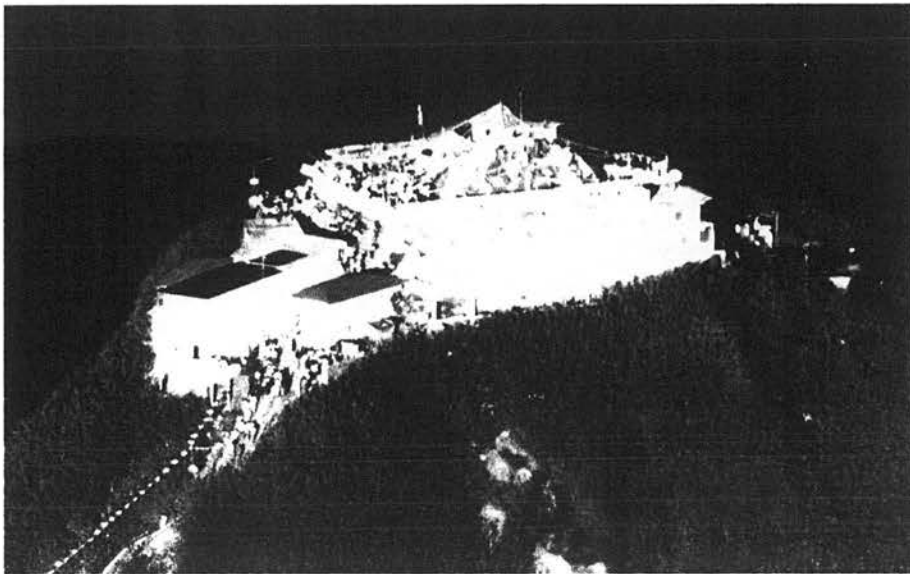


Picture 4.2 Sri Pāda Temple in the mid nineteenth century (source: Marshall 1954:172)

¹⁵³ I was told that this statue was offered to Sri Pāda by Galaboda Ñānesvara, the head monk of Hunupitiya Gangarama in Colombo, to whom donated it by a Korean Buddhist delegation.



Picture 4.2 Sri Pada temple in the late nineteenth century (source: Skeen 1870)



Picture 4.3 Today's Sri Pāda Temple.

4.9. ii Temple Administration

Let me now discuss how Dhammānanda constituted, or rather reconstituted, the Sri Pāda temple administration as part of his own project. Let me firstly briefly sketch the present administrative system, because as we shall see the present system is more or less constructed on the corpse of Dhammānanda's project. Presently, there are more than twenty-five lay temple servants and seven Buddhist monks connected to the Sri Pāda temple and its associated temples and establishments¹⁵⁴. Of these, the

¹⁵⁴ There are two temples attached to the main temple Sri Pāda: one is situated near the temple village, Kuttapitiya, in Pelmadulla and the other one is situated at the neighbouring pilgrimage bazaar,

chief priest, the temple Trustee and the monks in charge at the two associated temples and their servants hold permanent positions, within the overall temple administration, but almost all the temple staff at Sri Pāda are temporarily appointed for the six-month pilgrimage season. They are all ‘officials’, not ‘worshippers’, and appointed for both day-to-day duties and ritual activities by either the chief monk or the Trustee monk, who are themselves officials in the temple administrative system. Under their authority all temples officials are appointed, operated and sacked¹⁵⁵. However, the Trustee monk of the Sri Pāda temple is usually appointed by the Public Trustee (like appointment of other Trustees for major temples and shrines in the country). The Trustee is, however, not elected but has made use of provision 10 of the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance of 1931, which gives the chief priest of the Sri Pāda temple the right to nominate the Trustee. Like Dhammānanda in 1956, the present chief priest has nominated himself as the temple Trustee (1986-1997). In 1998, however, he resigned from the post of Trustee himself, and nominated a new Trustee monk who had actively supported during his election campaign in 1986.

In general Temple officials can be divided into two main categories: the monks and lay officials. The monks do not consider themselves as ‘official’, but they are paid for their ritual and administrative services at the Sri Pāda Temple. Usually, there are four monks in charge of the daily ritual ‘service’. This ‘service’ is usually performed on a shift basis with each monk staying at the shrine of the sacred footprint (*padma*) to officiate (*tevava*) for six hours a day. Not surprisingly, the day-time is assigned to the senior monks, while the junior monks have to officiate in the most difficult hours, that is the chilly nights. The most senior monk is responsible for the proper functioning of over all religious affairs at the temple, with the official designation *agamika sevādhikāri* (chief officiating monk of religious affairs). Overall religious and administrative affairs within the Sri Pāda temple come under the jurisdiction of another senior monk, ‘executive monk’ (*kūṭṭrayadhikāri*), who also takes part in

Palabaddala. Both temples are officiated by two residents monk and a few lay servants. The Sri Pāda temple is also owned two establishments: one is the official residence of the chief priest in Colombo, and the other is a newly build establishment at the northern pilgrimage bazaar town, Nallatanni. Both places have full time housekeepers. In addition, there are two full time drivers working for the temple.

¹⁵⁵ During my fieldwork three minor ‘officials’ were sacked on ‘disciplinary ground’.

daily ritual activities and monitors the administrative work of the temple manager. The lay staff are headed by the ‘manager’ (*kalamanakāra*), who is the chief lay administrator of the temple and has jurisdiction over all the ‘secular’ activities. Both the executive monk and the manager are monitored by the Trustee monk who is finally responsible to the chief priest of the Temple¹⁵⁶. Usually the chief priest and the Trustee monk are not resident at the Sri Pāda temple; instead they run the administrative work on the main temple and its associated temples through an office known as “Sri Pāda office” (*sripada kāryālaya*), situated at the *Dharmasāla Pirivena* or monastic school in Ratnapura where the Trustee monk, also holds the office of the Principal of that monastic school¹⁵⁷.

The present official administrative system at the Sri Pāda temple was created and introduced in the 1950’s under the new administrative project of Morontuduve Dhammānanda. The new religious and administrative structure at the Sri Pāda temple, was entirely difference from the structures that had been operating during its long history. (For example; the first institutionalised project of king Vijayabahu I in the early 12th century and the 18th century Saranamkara-Kīrtisri reordering project during the Kandyan monarchy (see chapter 2)). So Dhammānanda’s administrative project was not built upon a temple administrative system which reflected a late pre-colonial or Kandyan social order (as discussed by Seneviratne (1978) and Evers (1972)). Dhammānanda did use some terminology and technologies from “Rituals of the Kandyan State”, for example the title *tewava* (*tewava bhara himivaru*, lit. the officiate monk of daily ritual) or the name of the ritual service ‘*tewava*’ itself but he worked out the temple administrative system by using his own technique or strategies.

¹⁵⁶ The Trustee monk is usually appointed for five years and can be renewed with the consent of the chief monk for further periods. In the each appointment Trustee is required to deposit the bonded money (the recent value is Rs.200, 000) at the Buddhist Commissioner’ Department, which is known since 1981 as the Ministry of Buddhist Affairs. The chief monk and the Trustee monk are “legally bound” with the Sri Lankan State on the financial matters of the Sri Pāda temple.

¹⁵⁷ This monastic school was the main centre of 1970 and 1986 election campaign for Sri Pāda chief priesthood. Since 1970 Sri Pāda office is located here and it runs under the full time account Clark whose major duty is to prepare monthly temple’s account, which usually sends to the deputy commissioner of the Ministry of Buddhist Affairs at the Ratnapura branch.

Let me explain this point with a few examples: the *Kapumahattaya*¹⁵⁸, the lay priest of the deity, who officiates at the shrine of the guardian deity; *Saman* is not a “hereditary” servant of the Sri Pāda temple, but usually belongs to the high caste of *govigama*. Their relationship with the Sri Pāda temple entirely depends on monetary relations rather than hereditary relation. At Sri Pāda the *Kapumahattaya* is recruited on a contractual basis for one particular pilgrimage season (six months) and is subjected to further renewal. The present chief *Kapumahattaya*¹⁵⁹ is the son of the former *Kapumahattaya* who was first recruited by Dhammānanda in the mid 1950’s. Interestingly, before Dhammānanda hired them, they were priests for a local deity shrine dedicated to another popular guardian deity in the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon ‘*Kataragama deviyo*’ (god Kataragama). After the incorporation of these priests of the god Kataragama as “the priests of god Saman” under Dhammānanda’s administrative project, they completely stopped serving at the local Kataragama shrine where they had served for generations. Similarly, the present drummers (musicians) at the temple were originally recruited by Dhammānanda from a ‘traditional’ village of the drummer caste (*berava*) and assigned to provide a daily drum offering (*hevisi pūjāva*) at the temple rituals for a monthly payment. These people have now been serving as the “official” drummers to the Sri Pāda temple for nearly fifty years¹⁶⁰.

New categories of temple officials were also created and introduced and their duties and responsibilities were worked out in written form as part of the Dhammānanda’s project¹⁶¹. Among them, for instance, were the posts of daily ritual service supporters

¹⁵⁸ Traditionally they were known as “*kapurala*”.

¹⁵⁹ Two “*kapumahattayas*” officiate at the shrine today: the chief and the deputy *kapumahattaya*. Interestingly, the deputy *Kapumahattaya* does not come from a family of the deity priest. According to him, he first came to the temple as a ritual service supporter (*tewakāraya*) at the footprint in 1970, and in 1973 he was asked to serve at the deity shrine where he learned “art of ritual practices” from the father of the present chief deity priest and in 1978 he was assigned as the deputy deity priest at the Saman shrine of the Temple (Interviewed on 21/11/2001).

¹⁶⁰ Conversation with the leader of drummers, Sakaradhipathi Charlis (67) on 25th Feb. 2002.

¹⁶¹ Dhammananda had worked out a document called “the constitution of Sripadastana” in which all the duties and responsibilities of the temple staff were explained in detail but I have never seen it. My effort to get a copy of the document from the Trustee monk failed because he does not want to have

(*tevakārayo*) at the footprint shrine and the deity shrine, service providers to the monks (*sangha upastāyakayo*), temple cook and kitchen workers (*prathya sampādakayo*) and clerks (*lipi karuvo*). The somewhat arbitrary hierarchical structure that Dhammānanda crafted can be seen in the present day Sri Pāda temple staff formation:

The Chief monk of Sri Pāda (*nāyaka hāmuduruvo*)

The Trustee monk (*bharakāra himi*)

The Executive monk (*kūtrayadhikāri himi*)

The officiate monk of religious affairs (*āgamika sevādhikāri*)

The officiate monks of daily rituals (*tevāva bhara himivaru*)

The Manager (*kalamanākāra*)

The Chief deity priest and the deputy priest (*Kapumahattayas*).

The servants at the footprint shrine and the deity shrine (*buddha upastayakayo or tevakārayo*)

The servants of monks (*sangha upastayakayo*)

The Clerks (*lipikarūvo*)

The Kitchen workers (*prathya sampadakayo*).

The Drummers (*berakarūvo*)

The Watchers (*murakarūvo*)

The Cleaners (*kamkarūvo*) or scavengers (*pavitra karūvo*)¹⁶²

Compared to the ‘traditional’ temple organization based on the complex division of labour reported for some Kandyan temples (Evers 1972; Seneviratne 1978; Kendrick 1984) and the less complex organization found at the Bo Tree Temple (Nissan 1985) at Anuradhapura, Dhammānanda’s model at the Sri Pāda temple is remarkably simple and ‘modern’. Where a multiplicity of different castes have traditionally performed services at certain Kandyan temples as a condition of their holding land

the detail of that “constitution” publicly visible. However, the duties and responsibilities of the temple manager appeared in ‘*Sri Pāda vamsaya*’ of Omalpe Seelananda (2000). There are 51 regulations bound with the post of temple lay manager (2000:133-139).

¹⁶² Except chief *kapumahattaya*, drummers and scavengers, other temple staff members are either appointed during the period of former chief priest or the current chief priest but after the appointment of new Trustee monk in 1998, he has made some changes in the lay temple staff by recruiting some people loyal to him.

dedicated to these temples, and many different caste groups are still involved in such temple service as Nissan reports for the Bo Tree Temple, such service is equally performed by one caste group at the Bo Tree (ibid.). Interestingly, today such caste based ‘hereditary’ Temple service is hard to find in Sri Pāda temple affairs. In contrast, today the internal organization of the Sri Pāda temple operates under the form of “tradition” (*sampradāya*), established by Dhammānanda, the founder of ‘modern’ temple. As in other main Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka, the majority of temple staff are high caste, *goyigama*. Traditionally they are landowners and farmers, holding a superior position in the caste hierarchy, and they are also the biggest caste in the Sinhala speaking areas of the island. The drummers are from the low caste, popularly known as *berava*, a numerically smaller caste who are popular ritual specialists, best known for their planetary rites (De Silva 2000) and rites for demonic affliction (Kapferer 1983; 1997). The temple scavengers are completely alien to the Sinhala caste hierarchy. They are South Indian Tamil (Hollup 1994), brought to the temple area after the opening up of the plantation economy in the mid nineteenth century by the British. Unlike other religious sites that I have referred to above, caste inequality is noticeably absent in the “secular arena” of Sri Pāda temple¹⁶³. However, when it comes to “sacred performances” the caste difference between *goyigama* and *berava* is more visible. Also, the estate Tamils [scavengers] are not allowed to clean up the most sacred upper courtyard (*uda maluva*) area of the temple. But compared to other major Buddhist temples in Sri Lanka caste doesn’t play a vital role in the internal social organization of the ‘modern’ Sri Pāda temple.

This temple organization (excluding chief priestship and the Trusteeship), as I mentioned before, was first introduced by the former chief priest, Dhammānanda and it continues today without major alteration. The temple authorities are not in favour of altering the administrative system of Dhammānanda. In fact, as the present executive monk of the temple emphatically said, “If we ignored the *sampradāya* (lit. ‘tradition’) of Rev. Dhammānanda we can not properly run this place”. He means that the current temple has been properly operating under the system introduced by

¹⁶³ For instance: at the time of the sorting of daily coin offerings all the lay temple staff sit together (even the scavenging people), they take food together except the lay manager, and chat to each other, sharing cigarettes and betel chew, and calling by name.

Dhammānanda and running the temple administration out of that system would lead to disarray. Though Dhammānanda's administrative project seems to remain unchanged, his ritual project has been altered by adding new ritual practices, and ceremonies into the 'official' religious affairs in the last few decades or so. These changes are explained in the next chapter. Dhammanada's overall projects - ritual, administrative and physical or architectural - are worthy of further analysis. As far as the administrative and physical projects are concerned, the 'internal organization' we see today at the Sri Pāda temple is not continued from 2500 years, or even 250 years, but it began under Dhammānanda's 'Sri Pāda temple reordering project', that started under the momentum of rising Buddhist nationalism in post independence Sri Lanka. However, at least since the 12th century, more precisely from the regime of King Vijayabahu to the mid nineteenth century, and after, different physical or symbolic structures and temple administration systems have been introduced and operated and contested, and then finally submerged or faded from the central visibility. Though Dhammānanda's temple administration is still dominance at Sri Pāda, the "official ritual" version that he introduced at the same historical juncture has been contested and modified by two later chief monks. This modification and contestations of the "official" ritual project of Dhammānanda is taken up in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: 'Official' Buddhist Practices at the Sri Pāda Temple¹⁶⁴

The religious events at the Sri Pāda temple can be loosely categorized into two distinctive forms: the 'official' or 'public', which are organised and internally maintained by the temple authorities, and the 'non-official' or 'private' religious practices that are mainly performed by the pilgrims themselves at Sri Pāda temple. The former is the subject matter of this chapter, and the latter will be discussed in next two chapters. The 'official' or 'public' religious practices at Sri Pāda temple are manifold. There are the daily or regular rituals which take place in the morning, mid day, and evening without fail. Then on Wednesdays and Saturdays, a special evening ritual known as '*kemmura pūjāva*' is added to the daily ritual. In addition to the daily rituals, there are major 'public ceremonies', or annual ceremonies that include the full moon day merit-making ceremonies (*pōya pinkama*), (see table 5.1). Among them there are three major public ceremonies: the "inaugural" or "commencement" ceremony, and the "closing" or "concluding" ceremony, respectively mark the beginning and the end of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage season. The main feature of these two ceremonies is the escort of two images of the guardian deity, Saman, in a motorcade procession from Ratnapura to Sri Pāda, and then back at the end of pilgrimage season. The third main ceremony is the full-moon day merit-making ceremony in March, known as *mādin dina pinkama*. This ceremony is organised as a nationally important religious festival for the island. Interestingly, non-Buddhists hardly participate in these rituals and play no part in the temple proceedings. Hence, not surprisingly, 'official' religiosity at Sri Pāda temple is unmistakably Buddhist in orientation.

¹⁶⁴ I used 'official' here in the sense of distinguishing the 'internal' ritual practices of the temple from the ritual practices and technologies that are brought into ('external') the temple by its pilgrims. It can be also designate as 'Public' and 'Private' or 'congregational' and 'Non-congregational'. However, later practices at the temple will be discussed in the next and the following chapters.

Table 5.1 - Annual ritual calendar of the Sri Pāda Temple.

Month	Ritual
December (full moon day)	Commencing ceremony
January	Full moon day merit making ceremony (<i>pōya pinkama</i>)
February	-do-
March	The main merit making ceremony of full moon day (<i>mādin dina pinkama</i>)
April	Full moon day merit making ceremony (<i>pōya pinkama</i>)
May	Concluding ceremony (day after the <i>vesak</i> full moon day).

The main features of ‘official religiosity’ at today’s Sri Pāda temple that I have outlined above is not simply a version of what Dhammānanda introduced during his jurisdiction (1954-1970) because his version has been modified and remade by the two subsequent chief priests. One of the remarkable innovations made under the current chief priest, Handapāngoda Wimala (1987-), is the introduction of grandiose religious events for the “inaugural” and “closing” down of Sri Pāda pilgrimage in the mid 1990s. Before that, he introduced late night offerings (*pūjāva*) to the guardian deity of the temple, Saman, from 1987 as his personal promise to the deity. The chief priest before him, Batugedara Yasassi (1970-1986), had introduced the all-night *pirit* chanting ceremony, and *bana* preaching (formally started by Dhammānanda but only a regular event under Yasassi), especially at the annual full-moon day festival in March (*mādin dina pinkama*), which itself became a nationally important religious event under his jurisdiction. He also introduced the system of sponsoring (*dayakatvaya*) the full-moon days’ merit -making ceremony (*pōya pinkama*), which has become a popular event at the temple. Such large-scale ceremonies organised by the temple authorities themselves, clearly indicate the intensity of the Buddhization of the site.

The Daily Rituals

There are formal daily rituals or ‘service’ performed at Sri Pāda temple as at many other major temples in the country. The daily rituals are performed primarily to ensure the stability of the Buddhist universe and not for the benefit of individuals, although they may attend. The daily ‘services’ consist of the morning, mid day, evening and special night offerings. The last is specially performed only at the deity shrine of the god Saman. Then on Wednesdays and Saturdays, a special ritual is added to the daily ritual. The daily ritual at the footprint shrine is generally called *buddha pūjāva* or offering to Buddha and *deva pūjā* is usually offer to the god Saman at his shrine but there is no *deva pūjā* in the morning and evening offerings. The first daily *buddha pūjāva* starts at 6.30 a.m. the second one (*dahaval buddha pūjāva*) at 11.00 a.m., the third one (*savasa gilānpasa pūjāva*) at 5.30 p.m. and separate daily *deva pūjā* (offering to the god Saman) at 11.15 a.m. and 10.30 p.m. These ‘services’ are not as complex as the temple ‘services’ described by H.L Seneviratne at the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy (1978: 38-64) and by Hans-Dieter Evers at the Lankatilaka temple at Gadalaḍeniya near Kandy (1972: 48-73).

Both Seneviratne and Evers concentrate on the internal structure of the temples they study, and understand them against the backdrop of the religious and social organization of the Kandyan kingdom. Broadly for them, these temples are self-consciously ‘traditional’ and ‘historical’. But to ‘historicize’ such representations of the pilgrimage sites today is problematic. If we try to understand today’s Sri Pāda temple as ‘traditional’ or ‘historical’ we would fail to understand different versions of its internal organization and ‘official’ ritual practices which have emerged during and after Dhammānanda’s project. If someone wants to call this version as ‘traditional’, I would not object, but I would say that today’s internal organization and ‘official’ ritual practices at Sri Pāda temple are not necessarily “traditional” in Seneviratne and Evers sense. Like other major rituals the daily offerings, which we see today at the Sri Pāda temple, have been elaborately reconstituted or remade at first under Dhammānanda’s ‘reordering project’ and later under the ‘projects’ of two other chief monks. Let me add some detail on the recent version of the ‘official’ daily rituals that I witnessed during my fieldwork at the Sri Pāda temple.

5.2.i Morning Offering

Let me start with the morning Buddha *pūjāva* which is a simple one in its performative orientation. The morning offering usually takes place at the temple just after the sun rises. Before the morning offering, at around 6.15 a.m., the drummers usually offer the drumming beat known as “*teva mura*,” and during the day, seven such *teva mura* are offered at the footprint shrine at frequent intervals. Meanwhile a temple servant (*buddha upastāyaka*) cleans up the flower altar of the footprint shrine (*padma*) and prepares it for the morning offering. Soon after the drum offering, drummers are joined in the usual offering-carrying procession (*pūjāva vadamavana perahāra*)¹⁶⁵, which was usually (other than *pinkama* days) assembled as follows:

- 1) A drummer with short drum (*daula*)
- 2) A drummer with a flat drum (*tammātama*)
- 3) A piper with a short oboe (*nālāva*)
- 4) A temple servant with a flower vase
- 5) A temple servant with the silveroffering tray containing a silver bowl of rice, four dishes of curried vegetables, a dish of sweet and fruit and a water (*pān*) container. And together with an (yellow colour special umbrella: ‘*mutukudaya*’) umbrella holder
- 6) A temple servant with a betel tray (*dahāt heppuva*)

In the offering-carrying procession, temple servants were dressed in white but in this event like other similar events they have to specially cover their heads with the white turbans (as in royal etiquette). The assembled procession (*perahāra*) was taken on its usual path- steadily moved from the lower courtyard (*phala maluva*) and entered into the upper courtyard (*uda maluva*) from its’ southern gate while drummers were playing the ritual drum note *hevisiya*. Then the procession circumambulated clockwise around the sacred footprint shrine (including the deity shrine) once and the offerings were carried straight into the footprint shrine (*padma*). There it was handed over to the officiate monk before they were placed on the pre-prepared flower altar (*mal āsanaya*, lit. ‘flower seat’).

¹⁶⁵ As we have seen if it is a *pinkama*, instead temple servants, offerings are always carried by the members of the sponsoring party in a slightly elaborative procession and other days it is the duty of the temple servants to do so. In fact, in several occasions I was asked to carry the main offering to the Buddha in such procession, which I did.

The morning Buddha *pūjā* conducted by an officiate monk in the following sequence; first the crowd was asked to utter words of homage to Buddha (*namaskaraya*) and followed by the verses of the Three Refuges, (for Buddha, his doctrine or *dhamma* and his disciples or *sangha*). Here the congregation needs to repeat each line after the monk and likewise the Five Precepts (*pansil*- promising abstention from destroying life, theft, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication). After *pansil*, Pali verses are recited by the monk (including offerings of flowers, incense, lamps, foods and beverage, to the Buddha). Some verses are repeated by the devotees and others the signal for equally familiar responses from the prayers. After some fifteen minutes of initial verses of worshipping, the officiate monk usually makes a brief speech known as *anusāsanava* followed by the transferring of acquired merits (*pin anumodanava*) from the ritual acts mainly to gods, godlings (*devi devataun*) and death relatives of the participants (*apa naming miya paralova giya*), and the participants. At the end of the '*pin anumodanava*' drummers usually beat the concluding drum note and soon after the offerings are taken away from the footprint shrine by the temple servants.

5.2. ii Mid-day and Evening Offerings

Compared to the morning rite, a similar sequential pattern can be found in the mid-day and evening offerings. Hence, I have no intention to describe them in detail here, however, at the mid-day rite, special offering (*deva pūjāva*) is made to the guardian deity of the temple, Saman, that includes special fruits tray, incense (*suvanda dum*), and sounds of conch (*hak gedi pūjā*) by the chief priest of the deity (*kapumahattaya*). Similarly, at the end of evening rite (*gilan pasa pūjāva*), a special merit-transferring sub-rite ('*deviyanta pin anumōdanava*') is collectively performed by officiate monks at the shrine of god Saman to ensure his protection.¹⁶⁶ In addition to this rite, another

¹⁶⁶ This special merit-transferring is made to the temple guardian deity, Saman, by chanting a special Pali verse as follows:

Sambuddhapada varalanchana sobhitamhi
Vasosamantagiri muddhani devarāja
Punnamumodiya idam sumanabhidhano
Paletumam sathatasata hitavahanto ///
 O supreme king of god Sumana,
 You live in the mount *Samanta*,
 Where the lord Buddha imprint his supreme footprint,
 As the protector of this supreme place,
 O god having obtain the merit that we transfer to you
 Protect all the beings! /// (my translation).

special offering (*deva pūjā*) is also carried late at night (10.30p.m.) as a promise made to the god Saman by the current chief monk in 1986¹⁶⁷ and now it has been performed as an integral part of the daily temple rituals.

5.2. iii The Purificatory Rituals [*kemmura* ritual]

On Wednesdays and Saturdays there is a quite elaborate special ritual performed alongside the evening ritual. In the sphere of Sinhala Buddhist deity worship, these particular days are recognised as *kemmura* days¹⁶⁸ (auspicious days) for dealing with supernatural beings, particularly with gods and lesser deities. However, the distinguishing feature of the *kemmura* day ritual at Sri Pāda temple is 'purification' and the regular or daily ritual at the temple is not organized for this purpose. It is this addition that is affirmably purificatory. The Wednesdays and Saturdays 'purification' ritual at Sri Pāda temple also includes the cleaning of the deity shrine of the god Saman.

The main purificatory ritual performed at the sacred footprint shrine is the ritual bathing of the sacred footprint (*padma dōvanaya*) by a senior officiate monk. Similar ritual is also being performed at the inaugural day ceremony therefore reader might find more information on this later in the chapter. Before the ritual the upper courtyard (*udamaluwa*) is cleaned up and locked up, and no pilgrims are allowed to enter into the temple premises during the ritual. In the first place the footprint is washed with pure water (*pān*) and before the second bath the monks usually apply lime (*dehi*) over the sacred footprint and wash it out by adding a second pot of pure water. The bathing water is always collected into a few bottles and kept inside the deity shrine for various purposes.¹⁶⁹ After finishing of the final ritual bath, the footprint is gently mopped up with a white towel until the water is dried out and then

¹⁶⁷ The chief priest had made a vow to the god Saman if he would win the election a special puja would be offered.

¹⁶⁸ Gombrich reports that Sundays, Tuesdays, and Fridays are the *kemvara* (*kemmura*) days in his area (1971: 194).

¹⁶⁹ According to the chief *kapumahattaya*, this water is mainly used for preparing 'the sandalwood paste' that is usually applied on the foreheads of the worshippers to the shrine and also it is make use of as the blessed water for the infertile women. He also said that, some people whom he knows using this water as protective measure of their crops from the pests. One vegetable cultivator whom I met at Sri Pāda temple told me according to his own experience this holy water has the 'power' of the increases the harvest but this idea is not widely popular among the people.

covered with a beautifully made symbol of the Buddha's footprint.¹⁷⁰ Unlike other days, after all the offerings were placed the monks and lay temple servants move away from the footprint shrine and stay a few yards away from the shrine before conducting the evening ritual. This happened only on *kemmura* days otherwise the daily rituals are usually conducted inside the footprint shrine. We may find the reason for that in a minute. Similarly, the shrine of the god Saman is also washed and cleaned up by the two *kapumahattays* and their assistants. After that a mixture of sandalwood paste, milk and water (*sandun kiri pān*) is sprinkled over the footprint, the deity shrine and around the whole upper courtyard. And likewise, the smoke of incense (*suvanda dum*) is also wafted. It is after all sorts of offerings a senior officiate monk conducts the usual evening ritual.

The main purpose of holding this purificatory ritual, according to a senior officiate monk, is to invite gods, especially god Saman to worship the footprint of Buddha. Let me quote 'the official' idea behind this special ritual through the monk's words:

Human don't worship this footprint (*padma*) for the period of six months during that time only gods are worshiping it but when the human start to worship it for other six month of the year, gods don't get the chance to carry on the worship of the footprint in regular manner. Hence, to satisfy the gods, the temple is carried out the *kemmura* day ritual that allows them to worship the Buddha's footprint.

This assertion of this kind does not come from the 'ancient' Buddhist sacred text in order to justify such purificatory ritual, which is no doubt a Hindu practice in orientation but I see it as a recently constructed brief narrative, which is trying to legitimise such Hindu practices as the Buddhist practice by narrating it with the Buddhist flavour. Such Hindu-Buddhist syncretism of the 'official' religious practices at Sri Pāda temple is another area to be investigated by someone, but given the limitation of my current project, I have insufficient material to develop this idea. However, I treat this assertion and the purificatory ritual itself as a recent innovation

¹⁷⁰This symbolic footprint has made in cloth with the shape of a lotus and the middle of it covers the 108 small squares each consist of an auspicious symbol (*magul lakunu*) of the footprint of Buddha. But I ignore the discussing of the symbolic important of the Buddha's footprint here. As a meritorious act some pilgrims are offering this kind of footprint to the temple. Similar footprint made in copper is also placed on the front wall of the footprint shrine.

in a larger project of the reformulation of the historically view “multi-religious sacred site” as the Buddhist sacred site.

5.3 Daily Ritual under the Revolutionary Monk

The conducting of above described daily rituals has undergone some innovative changes through the one particular monk, Ratana¹⁷¹. Ratana was born in a village near Horana and became a monk at age of 24 at a hermitage in Baddegama near Galle in 1975 and for nearly twenty years he lived their as ‘forest dwelling monk’ and he left from there due to a dispute on the ownership of the hermitage in mid 1990’s. Since then he has not been permanently resident in any particular temple, and in 2000 he came to a temple belong to the chief priest of the Sri Pāda temple at Dumbara and soon after he was assigned as an officiate monk at the Sri Pāda temple.

Though he is quite new to the Sri Pāda temple he was able to make some radical changes in the daily ritual service (*tewava*) by introducing a new style of recitation of Buddhist liturgy, mostly in the Sinhala language, and chanted melodically, whereas other monks only used this Pali language. This new form of popular recitation was first introduced as an integral part of a new form of ritual known as *Bodhi pūjā* by the Venerable Ariyadhamma in the mid 1970s (see Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988: 384-410; Seneviratne and Wickramaratne 1980). Ratana was quite affected, like other young monks, by Ariyadhamma’s innovative and mellifluous chanting of the verses he had composed and presented them with purely emotional appeal, which also captured the attention of a large number of young men and women at the time. Due to his unexpected popularity, Ariyadhamma held a series of ‘new’ *Bodhi pūjā* in large towns all over the country. In 1979, one such ritual was held during the *vas kālaya*¹⁷² or the three-month rainy season retreat, at the Urban Council public hall in Ratnapura where Ratana became closely acquainted with Ariyadhamma. After this meeting, Ratana became a strong follower of Ariyadhamma and began to conduct his own ‘innovative style’ of ritual performance after Ariyadhamma’s early death in

¹⁷¹ The name has been changed.

¹⁷² Vas, which originally means ‘rain’ was the three-month monsoon period in north-east India when the Buddha told monks to desist from their wandering and stay in one sheltered place. Though in Sri Lanka this period is not climatically so distinctive, monks still have to observe vas and stay in one place for the three months of vas (cf. Gombrich 1971: 279; also see Spencer 1990: 65-68).

1986. Though Ratana imitates Ariyadhamma's mellifluous chanting style (As a schoolboy I personally experienced Ariyadhamma's chanting style) at Sri Pāda temple he hardly uses the ritual verses Ariyadhamma composed. Instead he chants verses composed by himself in Sinhala, together with some 'old' Pali prose oriented to the sacred footprint (Buddha) and the god Saman. Let me quote some of his Sinhala verses that he has composed for worshipping the sacred footprint and the God Saman:

Lord Buddha came to Kelaniya
And pleased with invitation of the God Saman
Visited to *saman gira* (mount saman) and imprinted the footprint
We worship that 'golden footprint' daily

By the virtues of the Lord Buddha and the god Saman
May mind of all people be cleared!
By the virtue of the footprint
May mind of all people be freed from sin!
By the virtue of the god Saman
May all sufferings and troubles be vanished!
May have all well-being [in this world]
Until we achieve *nirvana*!¹⁷³

This introduction of a new version of the daily 'service' to the Sri Pāda temple was initially opposed by some senior monks, as a total violation of their traditional practice. As one senior monk put to me "this is totally inappropriate to the tradition that we have protected so far and we have never uttered verses of worship (*gahta*) other than Pali language". This strong opposition against Ratana failed to stop his new style of worship being practiced at the Sri Pāda temple¹⁷⁴. Instead, as I noticed, Ratana's style of worshipping began to attract many pilgrims visit to the temple with compared to other ritual service of the day. But this new style of ritual performance

¹⁷³ *Kelanipurata vādi louturu munidā*
saman devidu kara ārayuma pehādā
samangirata vāda tābu sita pehādā
ē ran patula apē namadimu sāmādā

saman bahadurū tilona muni - guna belen sāma hith pirevā!
saman gira inda pā piyum vānda - papayen sith bēhera vevā!
Saman deviduge ē anuhasayen - siyalu duk dos ath medevā!
Nivan dakinā jathi dakvā - siyalu yahapata udā vevā!

¹⁷⁴ I was informed that he has been nominated to officiate at Sri Pāda for the following years of my fieldwork.

not only attracted pilgrims to the temple official's ritual but also created new controversy among officiating monks at the Sri Pāda temple (more on this controversy later in the chapter). I now move from routine daily ritual to more elaborative public ceremonies at the Sri Pāda temple. Let me start with the major annual ritual, which is popularly known as the '*mādindina pōya pinkama*' or the merit making ceremony of the full moon day in March.

5.4.i The Full Moon Day Ceremony (*Mādin Pinkama*)

The celebration of full moon days (*pahalosvaka pōya*) is clearly visible in a long and well documented 'Buddhist history' of Sri Lanka. But when we look closely at the constitution of those practices and the agencies practising them it becomes clear that at different times and under different motives Sinhala Buddhists have accorded different interpretations to full moon days. For instance, as Walters correctly points out, the status of the full moon day itself was politicised in colonial Ceylon as a challenge to the Empire's official Christian holidays such as Sundays, Christmas and Easter. One of the leading motivators for this was the American Theosophist, Colonel Henry Steel Olcott (1832-1907)¹⁷⁵. Olcott fought the colonial government to declare full moon days as Buddhist holidays similar to Christian holidays, and he introduced 'Vesak carols' and also invented the Buddhist flag which is quite commonly displayed during full-moon day festivals (*pōya pinkama*) at Buddhist temples. Similarly, Walters has argued how different full-moon days of Poson in honouring to Mahinda (the founder of Buddhism in Sri Lanka) were reconceived during the 19th and 20th centuries. But according to him this 'modern Mahinda' or 'Mahinda the Nationalist', is no more permanent than his predecessors. Poson full-moon day has been repeatedly remade around the figure of 'Mahinda' as specific political, economic and social conditions have demanded (1998:133-162).

However, the reason for the emergence of a specific full moon festival around the Sri Pāda temple is unclear. Today there is a grand annual festival on the Mādin full

¹⁷⁵ Olcott and Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), co-founder of the New York based Theosophical Society in 1875, were attracted to the island in 1879 by news of Mohottivatte Gunananda's feat at Panadura against the Christian missionaries, arrived in Sri Lanka to organise the Buddhist Theosophical Society of Ceylon and Olcott latter became the western champion of the Buddhist revival movement in the late nineteenth century (see Malalgoda, 1976:242-255; Obeyesekere 1995).

moon day in March at the Sri Pāda temple, but that celebration has no specific connection with the Sri Pāda pilgrimage site. Even the monks have no clear idea about why they celebrate the Mādin full moon day at the Sri Pāda temple, but one senior monk told me the *mādin pinkama* at Sri Pāda temple is organised to celebrate the day that Buddha visited the city (*nuvara*) of Kimbulvat to preach his doctrine (*dhamma*) to the *Sakyas* (relatives of the Buddha). Other than that he failed to explain how that event is connected to this annual celebration¹⁷⁶.

Whatever the 'official' religious reason behind this annual full moon day celebration at today's Sri Pāda temple, the grandiose celebrations became visible after Dhammānanda's jurisdiction (1954-1970). But they were initially (re)invented at a precise historical moment of Buddhist history: (That was Mādin full moon day in 1956, on the occasion of the Buddha Jayanthi celebrations, 2500th anniversary of the Buddhahood). However, the phenomenal growth in Mādin festival's occurred during the chief priestship of Batugedara Yasassi (1970-1986) and after him under the current chief priest, Handapāngoda Wimala.

Yasassi reconstituted the Mādin full moon day festival, popularly known as "*mādin dina pinkama*" (lit. merit making ceremony at the March full moon day). Yasassi introduced special events to this ceremony, in addition to the regular daily rituals at the temple. Among them were the preaching of *bana* or *dharmadesana* (sermon), an all-night *pirit* chanting ceremony, *sanghika dāna* (food offering to monks) and *sila viyaparaya* (the *sila* campaign).¹⁷⁷ Yasassi also arranged to broadcast this full-moon day festival over the state-sponsored SLBC radio station. According to broadcasting sources, they have been covering this newly constituted '*mādin pinkama*' as an event of national importance for over 32 years. The growing popularity of '*mādin pinkama*' has been reported and created by press coverage of the festival and by the

¹⁷⁶ A Buddhist nun told me that more people visit to Sri Pāda on the full moon day because it would be the probable day that Sri Pāda was discovered but this view is not heard from fellow pilgrims.

¹⁷⁷ The taking of the Eight Precepts (*atasil*) is usually held to be a sign of exceptional piety by *upasaka* (male) and *upasika* (female) (see Spencer 1990: 63-64). Conversation with Kampane Gunaratana on 11th December 2001.

late 1980s the state television (*rupavahini*) began to give maximum publicity through live telecast of the *pinkama*, which attracts many viewers in the island.

5.4.ii Mādin Pinkama in 2002

Now let me present some of the main events in the 2002 '*mādin pinkama*', which I observed on 28th March 2002 at the Sri Pāda temple. Unlike the regular daily ritual, in the *mādin pinkama* (as I noted above) there were several special events taking place at the Sri Pāda temple. However, unlike Kataragama, the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, Kelaniya, Mahiyangana, and even the main deity shrine of Saman in Ratnapura, there is no spectacular procession (*perahāra*) as an integral part to the *mādin pinkama*. Though the procession is absent, a number of special religious programmes are organised in each year. The main 'official' religious events at the 2002 *mādin pinkama* were as follows:

- 6.00-6.30 a.m The observing of the Eight Precepts (*atasil samādamvima*) and the morning offering to the Buddha (*udāsana Buddha pūjāva*)
- 8.30-9.30 Preaching *bana* (*dharmadesanava*)
- 9.30-10.30 Discussion of Dhamma (*dharma sākachchāva*)
- 11.00-11.30 Mid day offering to Buddha (*Buddha pūjāva*)
- 4.00-5.00 p.m Preaching *bana* (*dharmadesanava*)
- 6.30-7.00 Evening offering to Buddha (*gilanpasa Buddha pūjāva*) and *Bodhi pūjāva*
- 9.30 to the following morning- all night *pirit* chanting (*sarva ratrika parittana dharma desanava*)

Such a large-scale merit-making ceremony (*pinkama*) is costly and requires a great deal of organisation. Hence, each year the *pinkama* is sponsored and organised by particular individuals or organisations. In 2002 the *mādin pinkama* was organised by an association of lay supporters (*dāyaka sabhava*) of a Buddhist nunnery (*upāsikarāmaya*) at Katukele in Kandy, which operates under the guidance of the chief nun, Sudharma *silmāniyo*.¹⁷⁸ Before this main *pinkama* her organization also

¹⁷⁸ Silmāniyo is a woman who has taken the ten precepts and lives as much as possible like a Buddhist nun, also known as *dasa sil māniyo s*, mothers of the ten precepts. Sudharma was born in 1939 at a small village near Kotmale in the central hill country. She is the fourth among five sisters in her

sponsored the inaugural day *pōya pinkama* in December at the Sri Pāda temple. Her connection goes back to 1972, since when she has been organising such *pinkamas* at the Sri Pāda temple. Before the 2002 *mādin pinkama* her association had already sponsored several *mādin dina pinkama* at the Sri Pāda temple. But their meritorious work is not limited to the Sri Pāda temple: in fact they organise such major merit making activities (*pinkama*) at other nationally important pilgrimage sites such as the Temple of the Tooth Relic in Kandy, the Bo tree temple in Anuradhapura and sometimes at major Buddhist pilgrimage sites in India too. The large sum of money and resources required for organising such major *pinkama* are mobilised through the donations of members of the *dayaka sabhava* and their relatives and friends. According to one such lay supporter, the total cost of organizing the 2002 *mādin pinkama* would be about four hundred thousand rupees (Rs.400, 000). Furthermore, supplying and carrying required things for the major *pinkama* from the mountain foot to the top, and preparing for the alms giving to monks, supplying the meal (*upasika dane*) to people observing *sil* and organizing the all-night *pirit* chanting, all require a great deal of voluntary support. So, for the 2002 *mādin pinkama*, about fifty members of the *dayaka sabhava* of the Buddhist nunnery (*upāsikarāmaya*) at Katukele (including men, women and several nuns) participated in organising this major *pinkama*.

Preparation for the Pinkama

The day before the Mādin full moon day was the busiest day at the Sri Pāda temple. The lay temple staff were busy decorating the temple premises with Buddhist flags, putting up waves of colourful bulbs over the shrine houses and around the upper courtyard (*udamaluva*) and fixing the public address system owned by the temple in an appropriate places. Preparations were under way to provide facilities for the expected guest monks, who were supposed to participate in the all-night *pirit* ceremony, and for the members of media crews who come to give live coverage of the *pinkama* over national media networks. The kitchen staff were also busy preparing large amounts of food for the guests and they also received instructions

family. Sudharma became a nun at age thirteen in February 1952. She is now in charged of the popular nunnery, the Lady Blake Upāsakarāmaya in Kandy, founded by nun Sudharma (Senior) in 1907, in fact placed was donated by Dhammavikrama Mohandiram and named after the wife of the Governor, Sir Henry Blake. For more detail on Buddhist Nuns community in Sri Lanka (see Nissan 1984; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 274-298; Bartholomeusz 1994).

from the sponsoring party of the '*pinkama*' about what to cook and what not to cook for the morning alms-giving (*hil dānaya*) and the midday alms-giving (*daval dānaya*). The sponsors had promised to help the kitchen staff in the preparation of the alms giving, because they believe, like other Buddhists, that preparing food for an alms giving (*dānaya pisima*) is as equally valued as the act of feeding a monk.

In the early morning of the Mādin full moon day about two hundred laywomen (*upāsikas*) and laymen (*upāsakas*), mostly older people¹⁷⁹ dressed in white, sat calmly on the floor of *udamaluva* in order to take *sil* by reciting the Eight Precepts¹⁸⁰ after the monk. Eventually after taking *sil* they joined the congregation for the morning offering to the Buddha. The procession taking the offering to the footprint shrine is a more elaborate form of the usual daily procession, in the number of participants and offerings carried. The three lay members of the *pinkama* sponsoring party dressed in white ceremonial kit similar to traditional Kandyan aristocratic dress¹⁸¹ and each holds food offerings for the Buddha. Specially prepared large umbrellas (*mutukuda*), symbol of kingship, are held over them by three temple servants. They are accompanied by drummers, Buddhist flag holders and flower vase-bearers. The procession gives an impression of a 'traditional' royal or noble parade. As soon as the procession reached the footprint shrine, the executive monk (*krūtayadhikari*) of the temple commenced the morning food offering to the Buddha (*udāsana buddha pūjāva*). This ritual event was telecast by *rupavahiniya* and broadcast on SLBC as the major ritual event of the full moon day religious programme at the Sri Pāda temple.

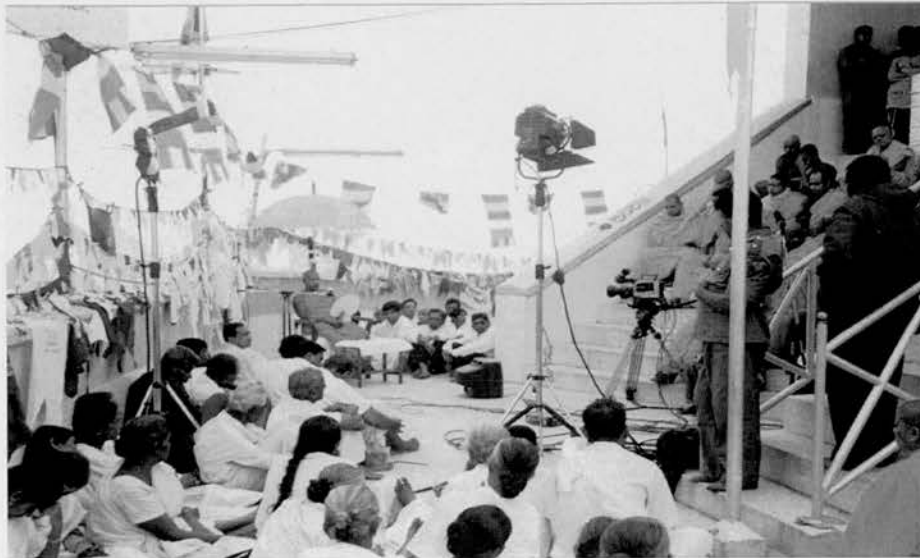
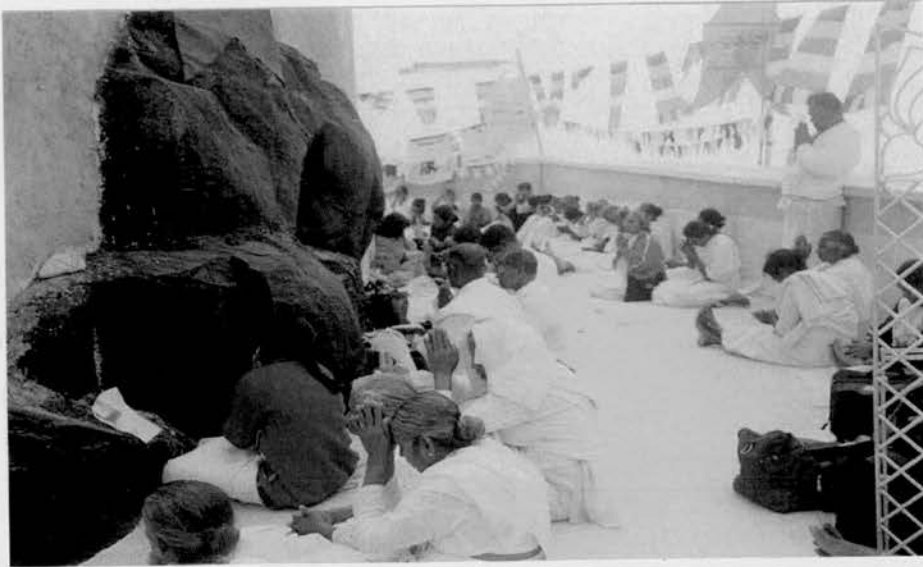
¹⁷⁹ On the basis of a study of rural Buddhism, Gombrich observed that 'very few people indeed take the Eight Precepts between the ages of twenty of fifty, except perhaps at Wesak' (1971: 274). This was also the case at Sri Pāda temple but the majority of them who took the eight precepts were old women.

¹⁸⁰ Gombrich gives details of the five, eight and ten precepts (1971: 64-66).

¹⁸¹ The dress was similar to the Kandyan aristocratic ceremonial dress but it differs from the traditional colourful attire of the Kandyan chiefs who parade in the annual Asala perahara at Kandy.



Picture 5.1- Officiate monks at the footprint shrine



Picture 5.2 laywomen and laymen listening to the sermon

After the morning offering there was a morning alms giving (*hil dānaya*) for the monks followed by *upāsaka dānaya* for the observers of the eight precepts. After the morning meal there was preaching of *bana* or *dharmadesanava* (sermon) for an hour¹⁸² by an invited monk from Ratnapura, mainly to an audience of the observers

of *sil*. At the end of the *dharmadesanava*, there was an interesting event called “*dharmasakachchāva*” (lit. discussion of the matters relating to Buddhist doctrine, Dhamma). For this electronically telecast *dharmasakachchāva*, the viewers could send their questions pertaining to issues of Buddhist doctrine and issues relating to the ‘good Buddhist way of life’ in advance. Those questions were directed to a panel of two Buddhist monks and a learned lay Buddhist.¹⁸³ Many questions were submitted but more time seemed to be used for the commercial message of the programme sponsors who had also sponsored overall telecast of the 2002 *mādin pinkama*. At about 11.00 a.m. the procession carrying the mid-day offering to the sacred footprint shrine and to the shrine of the deity Saman, assembled in the lower courtyard (*pahala maluva*) of the temple. It was quite identical to the morning procession. The same male members of the *pinkama* sponsoring-party carried the midday offerings to the Buddha (*dhaval duddha pūjāva*). A number of *dasa silmāniyo* (mothers of the ten precepts), and elderly *upāsakas* and *upāsikas*, and a large number of male and female lay participants assembled along the procession route to offer their homage to the offering procession (*pūjā perahāra*). As the procession passed them by, they touched (*ata gahanava*) each offering and shouted ‘*Sadhu, sadhu, sā*’.

The midday offering was the final episode to be telecast over the state owned television, *Rupavahiniya*, with a junior monk of the temple staff officiating. But, interestingly the name of the junior monk¹⁸⁴ was almost left out from the ‘official’ programme. The usual daily programme was rescheduled for the *mādin pinkama*, and two senior monks were asked to officiate both the morning and the midday offerings, which would definitely receive national coverage over state television. Under the

¹⁸² Seneviratne discusses how “traditional” dharmadesana has transformed into its “modern” form as an integral part to emerging “new Buddhism” in the country (1999: 42-55). This new dharmadesana was a radical departure from the traditional. It was confined to about one hour, a remarkable shrinking into one twelfth of its original duration. Next, it was free of the elaborate ritualism....was not a performance...as traditional one [simple] and it lacked the dramatic elements. Above all it focused on theme... of a Pali verse that the preacher chanted (1999: 49). Dharmadesanava at Sri Pāda is not differ from “the new dharmadesanava” described by Seneviratne.

¹⁸³ He was the former secretary of the Sabaragamuwa Provincial Council.

¹⁸⁴ Junior not because of his age but of he obtained higher ordination after two senior at Sri Pāda and also this was his first year of ritual service at Sri Pāda.

mādin pinkama programme this particular junior monk was not asked to officiate at either offering. This radical monks fought back against this decision made by the top official monks of the temple, and finally got the chance to officiate the midday offering- which was telecast over the national TV channel - which enabled him to challenge some of his critics who were against his “new style” of conducting the daily service at the temple.

The senior monks at the temple were not happy about the appointment of this monk as an officiate monk at the Sri Pāda temple. Partly because they found he did not belong to their own chapter of the Malwatta (though he belongs to the “forest dwelling chapter” of the Siyam Nikāya in which both chapters have their ‘roots’) in the Ratnapura District. The senior monks at Sri Pāda widely believe that “a monk who doesn’t has voting rights in a ‘Sri Pāda election’ has no rights to officiate at the temple”¹⁸⁵. As I have explained before, the controversy around him was not only because of his affiliation but also his own style of performance.

Let me come back again to the *mādin pinkama*. After the midday offering there was a *sanghika dāna* (alms giving): Five is the minimum number of monks required for this kind of a merit making ritual¹⁸⁶. There were about thirty monks, which is a big *dāna* who were fed with varieties of food followed by offering of ‘*pirikara*’ (monkly requisites). In return for this material support for the monks (*sangha* as whole community), the organizers, supporters and the participants receive merit (*pin*). In parallel to the *sanghika dāna* the midday meal for the people who had observed eight precepts was served. After their midday meal, they chatted in groups, some reading sacred books (*bana pot*), others relaxing and meditating at the temple premises.

At around 4.00 o clock the afternoon *bana* or *dharmadesanava* (sermon) was organized at the southern pilgrims’ rest (*visrama salāva*) of the temple. Most of the

¹⁸⁵ Though monks are firmly believed so, the chief priest has an ultimate power to appoint monks for Sri Pāda temple, For example Hikkaduve Sumangala and Morontutduve Dhammananda had appointed some monks whose had not voting rights.

¹⁸⁶ Food which has been formally received by a group of the *sangha* (monk) is called *sanghika* and usually no self-respecting lay person would accept it but I have seen (after the big *dānaya*) the remaining food containers filled up again being served to the temple staff and I myself have had the same food.

participants who were sitting calmly on mats listening to the evening *bana* were observers of the eight precepts or *upāsaka* and *upāsika*. At the end of *dharmadesanava* some of them stayed to maintain their eight precepts until the following morning, but most released themselves by reciting the five precepts or *pansil* after the monk. After the *dharmadesanava*, the evening offering to the Buddha (*gilan pasa*) was underway. Interestingly, unlike the morning and the mid day processions, women were conspicuous in the evening offering procession. Apart from the drummers and the umbrella bearer, all the participants were women; Sudharma *silmāniyo* was visible for the first time in the '*mādin pinkama*' though she participated in the morning rituals, which had been mainly dominated by male participants. She was carrying liquid offering (*gilanpasa pūjā*) to Buddha. Before her an old *upāsika* and a young *silmāniyo* were carrying vases with red flowers. Just behind her, an old *upāsika* carried the betel tray (*dāhat heppuva*) followed by another *upāsika* bearing a set of the eight requisites (*atapirikara*) for Buddha, then a long line of women, mostly old and middle aged *upāsikas* and *silmāniyo*s holding bunches of red lotuses in their hands. Sudharma was central in the evening offering because I later found that she was celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of her nun's life. At the end of the evening ritual, Sudharma was specially blessed by the officiate monk to mark her fifty years service to Buddhism.

The final ritual of the *mādin pinkama* was the all-night *pirit*-chanting ceremony. *Pirit* is a public ceremony where formalised chanting of Pali texts is normally recited by monks in a specially made temporary pavilion (*pirit mandapaya*). Though the occasion for holding a *pirit* ceremony is almost always quite specific, it is deemed to work in a general as well as a specific way. According to Gombrich and Obeyesekere the effect of *pirit* chanting is twofold:

The most sophisticated and perhaps also the most impeccably orthodox is that the texts are in fact sermons being preached to covert malign spirits to Buddhist ethics so that they will give up doing harm. The other effect is that it simply assimilates the recital of the scriptural texts into the general category of meritorious actions: the merit gained by the participants is offered

to the gods in a formula at the end, and in return they afford their protection (1988: 394).

The main features of this annual *pirit* ceremony are the same as ceremonies documented in detail by Yalman (1964); Tambiah (1970); Gombrich (1971: 201-6) and Seneviratne (1978:126-9). Hence I have no intention to describe the ceremony here. But the objectives of similar kind of *pirit* ceremonies seem to me have changed over the course of time. At the Sri Pāda temple, the temple authorities had introduced *pirit* into the *mādin pinkama* in the early 1970s, not only to benefit the organisers and participants in the ceremony, but also for the benefit of the 'whole nation'. This is quite similar to what Seneviratne (1978) at Kandy and Nissan (1985) at Anuradhapura have found: more elaborate *pirit* chanting lasting a week (*sati pirit*) 'for the benefit of the entire country'. The publicly stated objectives of the 2002 *pirit* ceremony at Sri Pāda temple were to bless (*asirvāda*) the newly elected United National Front (UNF) government and its Prime Minister, Ranil Wickramasinghe, especially his effort to bringing peace to the country,¹⁸⁷ and the organizers of the *mādin pinkama*, particularly Sudharma *silmāniyo*, and finally to bring rain to end the severe drought that had been experienced the country at that time¹⁸⁸.

Before the main *pirit* ceremony began a special *pirit* chanting known as '*vāsi pirita*' (lit. rain making ritual) was also performed by a group of monks at the footprint shrine. This rain-making ritual lasted about fifteen minutes and finally a pot of water, which was sanctified by the chanting, was handed over to the co-ordinating secretary of the Minister of Power and Energy who had represented the Minister of the newly elected UNF government at the all-night *pirit* ceremony at the Sri Pāda temple. The

¹⁸⁷ In February 2002 Wickramasinghe's government entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Tamil Tiger rebels (LTTE) and since then the country has been experiencing relative peace. In a snap poll of January 2004, Wickramasinghe's government lost its power to Chandrika Kumaratunga lead coalition. Now Sri Lanka experiences 'No war/No Peace' situation.

¹⁸⁸ At the end of this ceremony the intoned '*pirit water*' (*pirit pān*) at the ceremony said to be put into the hydro catchments area of the sacred mountain of Sri Pāda.

holy water was taken away to be put into the main hydraulic power generating reservoirs in the country, with a special appeal to god Saman¹⁸⁹.

Though the motives behind the main *pirit* ceremony were nationally important the participation of the wider Buddhist public at this ceremony was unimpressive. However, the *pirit* ceremony from Sri Pāda temple was broadcast nationally over the state radio until the following morning. Hence, telecasting such collective acts of worship at the nationally important pilgrimage sites over national media express the embattled nationalism of Sinhala Buddhists in recent Sri Lanka.

5.4. iii The Sponsors of *Pinkama*

Interestingly, there is a high demand for the sponsoring or organising of such collective or congregational form of merit making ceremonies or '*pinkama*', according to temple authorities, at Sri Pāda. The recent demand is not only for sponsoring the main [Mādin] *pinkama* but also *pinkama* on other full moon days (numerically four) of the year as well. The sponsoring of the main *pinkama* in March has already allocated to a different person or groups for the next few years (until 2006). Other than, the main *pinkama* the sponsoring other full moon day *pinkamas* at the Sri Pāda has also allocated to several groups and individuals who undertake to organise their *pinkama* in annual basis. Hence, temple authorities have encouraged those who wanted to organise such *pinkama* at Sri Pāda on weekends and other public holidays. During my fieldwork I have seen such *pinkamas* are organised on

¹⁸⁹ Hydraulic power is the main energy source in Sri Lanka. Due to the severe drought almost all the reservoirs were dried out; day and night power cuts were imposed and people of the dry zone areas of the country ran out of drinking water and their crops were damaged. Generally, social and economic life of the whole country was badly affected from the natural disaster. During this [politically] uncertain period I noticed that the then ruling party (PA) politicians had organized several rainmaking rituals of this kind throughout the country. A few such rituals had taken place at the Temple of Tooth Relic in Kandy, the Bo Tree Temple in Anuradhapura, Kataragama (*kiri vehera*) and the main shrine of god Saman in Ratnapura, as a special part of their annual festivals. These rituals were held under the patronage of a Minister of the PA government and the Chief Ministers of the PA control Provincial Councils and at the end of those rituals the intoned holy water (*pirit pān*) was brought to the footprint shrine [Sri Pāda] and finally put them where the main rivers in the country, said to be started off from the sacred mountain of Sri Pāda (Divaina 07th Sep. 2001). Some people have general idea where the four main rivers in the country are started off in fact I was pointed a place of tiny water stream in the half of way of the Ratnapura pilgrim's path by a villager that they believe as the place where the Black River (*kalu ganga*) begins.

every full moon days (see Table 5.2) during the pilgrimage season. Similarly, considerable number of *pinkamas* also have organised in the weekends and the public holidays during the months of February, March and April by the different individuals and groups at Sri Pāda temple¹⁹⁰. Characteristically, such *pinkamas* are not differed from the main *pinkama* in March but organising preaching (*dharmadesanava*) and over night *pirit* ceremony¹⁹¹ and the media attention¹⁹² on those *pinkamas* are notably absent. Also, except the *pinkamas* of full moon day, *upāsika dāne* is not an integral part of the other day *pinkamas*. This because of *upāsika dāne* is usually offered for those observing *sil* (the eight or ten precepts) only on full moon days. Though the *upasika dāne* is unavailable at these *pinkamas* there is great stress on giving (*dāne*); apart from *duddha pūjā* (offering to Buddha), *sanghika dāne* and *atapirikara pūjā* (feeding monks) are centrally visible in those *pinkamas*. What ever the little differences that exist in those *pinkamas* the organising such merit making *pinkama* at Sri Pāda, is required much courage, both financial and material support and resources. This will partly discuss in the case study of the Pathirana *māniyo* (priestess).

But until recently motivated individuals or groups could easily be conducted such *pinkama* without receiving prior permission from the temple authorities. Yet, today getting a sponsorship for such *pinkama* at Sri Pāda is not an easy task. The *pinkama* sponsoring group need to exchange several letters in advance with the temple authorities to find the appropriate date for their *pinkama* and once the date is allocated the temple authorities send them a printed list of requisites need for the *pinkama*. As I have noticed, the people who are unfamiliar with the new regularities of the temple authorities sometime end up with disappointed mood. Such groups either have to handover the things that they brought for the *pinkama* to the temple staff for make use of them for the daily offerings or could possibly share the *pinkama*

¹⁹⁰ In 2002, I witnessed eleven of such *pinkamas* at Sri Pāda.

¹⁹¹ However, as I noticed there was a *pirit* ceremony organised in a normal day *pinkama* in February by an organization call the *Chathura* Buddhist circle (*chathura bodu cavaya*) in Maradana, Colombo 10.

¹⁹² But the first full moon day *pinkama* (*navam pōya*) of the year 2002 was given a live broadcast by the popular private radio station in the country.

if the authorised sponsor of the date is willing to co-sponsored the *pinkama*. I have observed that the both such scenarios are worked at Sri Pāda temple. As the competition for a space for the *pinkama* at the Sri Pāda is becoming increasingly high, many patrons want to continue their *pinkama* un-interrupted manner because few interruptions might lead to possible cancellation of their annual *pinkama*. As the following table shows, except main *pinkama*, most of the *pinkamas* have been sponsored by particular groups or individuals for several years.

Table 5.2 – The Sponsors of Full Moon Days *pinkama* -2002

<u>Month</u>	<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Occupation & Domicile</u>	<u>Number of years</u>
December	Nuns Sudharma & lay supporters	Lady Blake Hermitage, Kandy	27 (1972)
January	L. Premaratna	Shop owner (snack bar), Ratnapura	4 (1999)
February	K. Appuhamy & A.B.Vasantha	Labourer in a Rubber estate, Gem minor/ a Priest of the <i>bodhi pūjā</i> ¹⁹³ , Ratnapura	15 (1986)
March	Nuns Sudharma & lay supporters	Lady Blake Hermitage, Kandy	5? (1977)
April	H. B. Tennakoon & W. M. Gunasekara	Vegetable Cultivator, Welimada Vegetable Cultivator, Haputale	20 (1980) 9 (1990)

Some Sponsors of non-Full Moon Day *pinkama* in March & April 2002.

<u>Sponsor</u>	<u>Occupation & Domicile</u>	<u>Number of years</u>
1. Wickramanayaka & lay supporters of <i>Tapovana</i> meditation centre	Motorcycle spare part-shop owner, Kandy	5 (1997)
2. G. Selavathi & Relatives	Ambatanna, Kandy	9 (1994)
3. E. M. Gunavathi	Retail trader, Haputale	5 (1997)
4. P. Siripala	Minor gem trader, Nivitigala, Ratnapura	3 (1999)

¹⁹³ In addition to this, he treats for snake biting (*sarpa vedakama*) and frequent participant of chanting lay *pirit* (*gihi pirit*).

5. D. Gunavathi Pathirana	Priestess of <i>Bodhi Pūjā</i> , Hapugala, Galle	8 (1992)
6 T.M. Jayasekara Tennakoon	Carpenter/Vegetable cultivator, Puhulepola, Welimada	8 (1995)
7. A village group/relatives	Deraniyagala (near Sri Pāda)	29 (1973)

Tough this kind of congregational or collective worship at the Sri Pāda is becoming increasingly visible among Buddhist groups in recent years, interestingly, [sociologically speaking] the most of the organizers of such merit making *pinkamas* at Sri Pāda are not coming from the so-called “middle class social backgrounds”. As the table 5.2 indicates most of *pinkamas* are sponsored by people come from less educated non-professionals social background, most of them inhabitants of the mountainous regions such as Ratnapura, Welimada, Haputale and Kandy where the popularity of the guardian deity of Sri Pāda is prominent. As they are not wealthy enough to organise such *pinkama* on their own, most of the *pinkama* organisers make collection in their home areas of both money and goods. According to an organiser those who donate money and goods for the *pinkama* would equally share the ‘merit’ (*pin*) that they would collectively earn at the Sri Pāda. Similarly, most believes that the organising *pinkama* at Sri Pāda as a highest meritorious act, which they can’t achieve through organising similar *pinkama* at other major pilgrimage centres in the country. In this regards, one particular patron of annual *pinkama* whose name is Jayasekera Tennakoon, age 36, father of two children, working as Carpenter from Welimada in central hill country gave me the following account:

In our life time we need to do meritorious work (*pin athē vāda*) that is only we take with us (to next life). Not like other [religious] places you have to organise a *pinkama* at Sri Pāda under great difficulties or barring enormous suffering (*duka vindagana*). So if we do so we would definitely earn much merit (*vādi pin*). Buddha has planted his footprint such a difficult place for us to understand the meaning of suffering. It is true, every body come to Sri Pāda without any [high/low] social division (*usas pahath behedayakin tōrava*) must bear the suffering.

Similarly, another patron, this time a priestess of age 62 from an area near to Galle, costal capital city of Southern province express her intension to hold a *pinkama* at Sri Pāda, I shall quote verbatim from my interview with this interesting informant.

I live by myself conducting *bodhi pūjā* and people give some money for my service. I save some of that money in a *sittu* (rotating credit system) with the intension of giving *dānaya* (generally *pinkama*) at Sri Pāda on 24th April in every year. That is the date I have been allocated. This is my eighth year. I began the *dānaya* in 1992, and I missed it only one occasion because I was ill. On 02nd and 03rd April of this year I gave a *dānaya* at the Sri Maha Bodhiya (Bo Tree Temple in Anuradhapura) therefore I hardly left any money for this year Sri Pāda *dānaya*. Though my clients are giving me material and financial support for the *dānaya*, I still need some money for the *dānaya*. I was nervous and disappointed and there was no way to find money. Thanks god Saman! (Saman *deviyanta pin siddha venna*) I found a gold chain on a road in the city of Galle and sold it and find the enough money for the *dānaya*. I believe that it was not a sinful act because I spent that money on meritorious act.

When I was 3 years my father had died. When I was a school going children my mother had been suffering from a cancer. Then I stop schooling for nursing her and did several odd jobs for survival of my mother and brother. Just after two year of my mother's death my brother became a monk and I joined to the Sarvodaya moment in 1971, worked there until 1989. While I was in Sarvodaya a handsome man promised marry me but he didn't. I was deeply shocked and I wanted to run away home to jump into a river to end my life. Suddenly, I got possessed by the *disti* ["gaze" "essence"] and my relative thought I was possessed by a demon but it was a *disti* of my mother. I am sure that I was escaped from the death by my mother. Since then I have the "protection" of my mother and she asked me to carry lot of meritorious work (*pin dhaham*) as well as "work" closely with god Kataragama.

Subsequently I began to conduct *bodhi pūjā* for people and also I established a small shrine (*devāle*) in my house for performing *set santi* "blessings". But I mostly do the *bodhi pūjā* through that "power" (*balayen*) I have cured

“illnesses” of many people¹⁹⁴. I obtain merit (*pin*) by doing so. Also I acquire much merit giving *dāna* at the *Sri Maha Bodhiya* (so far for three years) and at Sri Pāda and I want to continue those meritorious act in the coming years. In 2005, I am going to give a *dāna* at the *Dalada Maligava* as well. My main intension is to visit *dhambadiva* (pilgrimage to Buddhist sites in India).

I met several priestesses, like Pathirana *māniyo* at Sri Pāda whose basic intention was to visit Sri Pāda to acquire ‘merit’ for successfully continue their profession as priestess (more about this group in chapter 8).

Generally, *pinkama* sponsors believe that they acquire the highest merit by organising number of Buddhist practices within a *pinkama*. Most of the *pinkama* have common practices; each group involved in the *pinkama* usually prepares and offers the *Buddha pūjā* three times daily, led by a monk, and also provides food for the monks (*sanghika dāna*) and in addition to food, requisites such as robes and towels or sets of the eight requisites (*atapirikara*) are also to be given to the monks. Requisites are also offered to the Buddha (the footprint) at the footprint shrine, to be placed on the sacred footprint. Food also provide for the people who observe eight precepts (*upasika dāne*) at the Sri Pāda and at the end of *pinkama* the special *pūjā* to the god Saman is also likely to be offered at the deity shrine. Generally, organizers emphasise the way in which all the offerings are carefully prepared and the style with which they are taken to the temple, processions forming to bear them to the footprint shrine in decorous manner. In such *pinkama*, the daily formal *Buddha pūjās*, which at other times of the year involve a short time, becomes a long congregational merit making ceremony led by the monk. In any mean, the *pinkama* is not an individual or private act of worship; the monk led a congregation in recitation of the verses of offerings and other verses of worship and homage. The offerings are always dedicated to the lord Buddha and at the completion of the offerings and recitation, the monk recites a blessing (*asirvadaya*) specifically for the benefit of those who organise the *pinkama* and in general for the all participants. It is hoped these blessings ensure for the participants life after life without suffering (*dukak*) and

¹⁹⁴ A government minister who got satisfies with her *bodhi puja* offered her title of the justice of the peace in 1999.

without illness that they may enter the first stage of enlightenment and ultimately achieve *nibbana*. Merit is usually transferred to the gods and godlings and to the dead. The four guardian deities of the country (*satara varam deviyo*), specifically the god Saman, the protector of the Sri Pāda, receive special mention.

Organising *pinkama* need not be just for the merit that brings rewards in future lives. Meritorious behaviour of the organisers may also be hoped to bring the benefits for 'this worldly' means: a healthy life without undue suffering from which one may progress towards the goal of enlightenment. The nuns Sudharma who organised the *Mādin pinkama* and others like her such as Pathirana *māniyo* and Tennakoon and those involved in these merit making *pinkama*, explicitly hope for general benefit in this life from their meritorious acts at the Sri Pāda. In addition, interestingly, today such *pinkamas* are not only organised to seek individual benefits but also they are widely used for seeking general blessing or protection, from the 'forces' which are beyond the individual control. Some expressively mentioned objectives (end the severe drought and bring peace to the country) in the 2002 *Mādin pinkama* at the Sri Pāda was clearly revealed that the purpose of the organising grandiose congregational ceremonies are go beyond the simple objective of 'merit making'. Let me now turn to describe more recently innovate two main annual ceremonies which held to mark the 'inaugurating' and 'concluding' of Sri Pāda pilgrimage season.

5.4.iv The Commencement and Concluding Ceremonies of the pilgrimage

The annual commencement of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage usually begins on the full moon day of the month of December (*uduvap pōya*), and lasts for nearly six months before it 'officially' ends on the *Vesak* full moon day in the month of May. Though the temple is officially open to the public in December, they are more visible during the months of February, March and April. The day before the inauguration ceremony at the Sri Pāda temple, the most important ritual event takes place at its associated temple in Pelmadulla (Galpottawala temple) near Ratnapura, where two movable images of god Saman, the guardian deity of the temple, are kept during the 'off season' of the pilgrimage. The ceremonial carrying of these images, together with other sacred objects, and their installation at the Sri Pāda temple, symbolically marks the commencement of the annual pilgrimage. Similarly, at the end of each pilgrimage

season (in May) these images are ceremonially returned to the Pelmadulla temple and kept there until the beginning of the next pilgrimage season. As a security measure these valuable images are kept in the most secure place, and the public not allowed to worship them during this period.

Interestingly, until recently both the commencement and the concluding ritual events were not publicly celebrated, but were mostly confined to the temple staff. It is under the present chief priest, Handapāngoda Wimala, that such ceremonies have begun to be performed in a grandiose manner. According to temple officials, the commencement ceremony began as a publicly visible event around the early 1990s, whereas the concluding ceremony began much more recently, precisely from 1998. Both events are now organised with the support of the provincial government authorities and attract large numbers of the public. Let me describe the main events of the commencement ceremony of 2001 in which I fully participated.

5.4.v Motorcade procession (*riya perahāra*)

The most colourful public event in the commencement ceremony is that of 'the image carrying procession of the god Saman' to the Sri Pāda temple which is popularly known as '*deviyan vahanse vadamavima*'. Unlike other Buddhist processions, the images of the god Saman and other sacred objects, are carried to Sri Pāda in a colourful motorcade (*riya perahāra*)¹⁹⁵ which covers about 170 km. to reach the hill country pilgrimage bazaar town, Nallatanni, where vehicular access to the Sri Pāda temple ends. Obviously, the most elaborate part of the procession also ends there, when the sacred objects are carried to the mountain-top temple with a less impressive procession. At the Sri Pāda temple, the images and other sacred objects are reinstalled in a ceremonial manner before the temple is open to the public.

Before the beginning of the motorcade procession, at an auspicious time, the relic casket (*sadhatuka karaduva*) and the two moveable images (sandalwood and silver) of the god Saman are taken out and kept in a flower altar, before they are placed in a

¹⁹⁵ According to one of the organizers the colourful motorcade procession was first organized in 1990 under the patronage of a state bank branch in Ratnapura.

vehicle, where especially made shrine-house or golden canopy (*ransivi gē*) decorated with traditional art motifs is fixed. At this time, morning offerings are made, and the chief deity priest (*kapumahattaya*) makes a lengthy recitation to the god Saman in order to assure his protection for those participating in the procession. Soon after the recitation of *kapumahattaya* the place was opened for public worship for a limited period of time. A larger crowd was queuing outside the image house. When the second auspicious time arrived, while Buddhist monks were chanting blessings (*set pirit*), the sacred objects were placed in the beautifully decorated canopy (*ransivi gē*) in an open vehicle. In front of the motorcade procession, a vehicle with a public address system informed as the procession approached their area. Far behind it, another vehicle with a large picture of the god Saman, and right behind it, the police vehicles paraded. Between the first and second police vehicles, came the vehicle carrying the sacred objects and the vehicle of the chief priest. Behind the second police vehicle, a few vehicles carried Buddhist monks and the temple staff, followed by long line of procession vehicles, and most of which displayed Buddhist flags and yellow flags. Each vehicle was given a yellow sticker in which the place of the vehicle in the motorcade was marked with a number. The vehicles of higher government officials and influent people in the Ratnapura area, always got higher priority, whereas less affluent people got places at the back of the motorcade procession¹⁹⁶. Nobody is allowed to take their vehicle into the rear part of the motorcade without the prior permission of the temple authorities. The 2001 procession was well planned and well publicized. The route was decorated with Buddhist flags and banners, emblazoned with congratulatory messages and decorative arches (*toran*), framed at important towns and junctions¹⁹⁷. These decorations had been organized by Provincial administrative bodies and institutions such as State Bank branches, Police stations, Divisional offices and the local bodies (Samurdhi animators and GN officers) and also by some local traders and youth organizations. Some town councils went further and washed the procession route with turmeric water as it approached their respective administrative limit. As the

¹⁹⁶ I was fortunate enough to get my vehicle quite close to the rear part of the motorcade.

¹⁹⁷ As my research assistant later reported, there were about 125 banners and 5 arches along the procession route.

procession approached junctions and towns along the route, crowds lined the streets and offered flowers, fruits and coins (*panduru*) to the deity images, and some served refreshments for the procession participants. All the arrangements had been planned in advance by the Sri Pāda temple main office at Ratnapura, and a scheduled time of the procession approaching each junction and town was informed to the reception organisers. One of the main receptions took place at the main shrine of God Saman near Ratnapura, where the sandalwood image of the god was carried into his main shrine for special offerings. On this occasion, the chief priest, and the monks who accompanied him, were offered morning alms (*hil dānaya*), and some lay participants were also separately treated there. The chief lay custodian (*Basnāyake Nilame*) of the main shrine had organised this special event to welcome the procession as it passed by his shrine. Similar events were planned and organised at several Buddhist temples along the processional route.

Once the motorcade approached the plantation towns in the hill country, where Hindus outnumbered Buddhists, the procession received a mixed reception. But at the hill country town of Ginigathhena, the largest reception was organised by the Buddhist trading society. In Hatton, one of the largest plantation towns, the procession also received a similar reception, collectively organised by the Hatton branch of the Young Men Buddhist Association (YMBA). Interestingly, a few Hindu temples in the area also organized smaller receptions in front, with considerable Hindu participation.

5.4.vi From Motorcade to Human Hand

After escorting the god Saman with a great deal of honour and festivity, to Nallatanni, the images were briefly kept in the newly built Sri Pāda Buddhist Centre in order to facilitate further offerings and worship by people from the bazaar town. In the late evening, the images of God Saman were carried to the mountain-top Sri Pāda temple with the help of a few strong men in a small procession. The procession was a simple one confined to temple staff. In this part of the procession, public participation was low by comparison to the grandiose motorcade procession. The sacred objects were respectfully carried by five strong [Buddhist] men dressed in

white, and drummers occasionally offered drumming as the procession ascended the sacred mountain¹⁹⁸. The procession first stopped at a temple called the 'Peace Pagoda' (*sama chaithya*), which is run by a Japanese Buddhist monk. Since 1978 when the temple was founded, the Japanese monks have been offered their salutation to the passing procession with a brief Mahayana Buddhist ritual, and refreshments for the monks and the lay participants of the procession¹⁹⁹.

5.4.vii The Sacred Bath

Before the procession reaches Sri Pāda temple there is an important ritual performed at a place called *Sētagangula* (lit. icy water stream). Here, the sandalwood image of the god Saman is symbolically washed with the water of the *Sētagangula*. This is a simple purificatory ritual act in which a monk takes a piece of lime and washes it with water from the stream, then applies the lime pieces on the head of the god image thrice²⁰⁰. Having completed the ritual bath, the image is brought into a small shrine dedicated to the god Saman²⁰¹. Here, the procession party first observes the five precepts followed by the monks reciting a blessing (*seth pirit*). As the final ritual act, a coin (*pandura*) wrapped up in a white cloth is offered to the image of god Saman, replacing a similar *pandura* offered in the last year's ritual. I later found the expressive meaning of this final ritual act to be making of a vow to the god Saman in order to seek his protection for the procession participants before they commence the actual climbing of the sacred mountain. Interestingly, these ritual acts (ritual bathing, observing the five precepts and coin offering), are also repeated by the pilgrims when they pass this ritually important place (more on this in the next chapter). After

¹⁹⁸ In 1996, there was a protest made by a group of Buddhists against the carrying of the sacred objects by the Tamil Hindu plantation workers, since then objects have been carried by Buddhist men, but ironically, as I noticed in 2002, the sacred objects were not brought back by Buddhist men but by a group of Hindu Tamil as they did in the previous years - no one has protested so far.

¹⁹⁹ In addition to this they have been performing special daily ritual at the Sri Pāda temple. The influence of Japanese Buddhism at Sri Pāda is quite evident. The broad influence of Japanese Buddhism in Sri Lanka (see H.L. Seneviratne 1999:212-230, and Ananda Abeysekara 2001: 108-142).

²⁰⁰ Interestingly the role of the chief priest of the deity shrine is visibly absent in this ritual and sub rituals and unusually; the Buddhist monks seemed to dominate all ritual acts there.

²⁰¹ This shrine was built in 1987 before there was a wooden pole for tying wrapped up coins (*panduru*). A large sum of coins be offered at this shrine and a person is stationed by the temple authorities to collect them.

assuring the blessing and the protection of the god Saman, the procession moves slowly by passing stone steps until it reaches the scared mountain-top temple where the final rituals of the commencement of Sri Pāda pilgrimage take place the following morning.

5.5 The Enactment of the Buddhist 'sacred site'

Sri Pāda temple is almost an empty place until the official religious activities begin in December each year for a period of six months. The overall commencement programme at the temple can be seen as the enactment of this 'sacred site' as a Buddhist space. There is no non-Buddhist religious programme operating on this very important day. As I have mentioned before, the 'official' religious programme at the Sri Pāda temple is a predominantly Buddhist one: in this section I describe one such programme that marks the beginning of the annual pilgrimage season. In the early morning of the full moon day in December, the shrine of Saman, the guardian deity of the sacred footprint, is cleaned up, before two images of him are installed. Meantime, the monks perform the first purificatory ritual at the footprint shrine known as *tevava*. In the first place the footprint is washed with pure water (*pān*), then water mixed with lime, and finally sandalwood water²⁰². In the next step the footprint is gently dried with a white towel, then covered with a white cloth, and on top of that, a hand-made cloth facsimile of the Buddha's footprint is placed²⁰³. This follows the offering of a robe (*siyra*) to the sacred footprint, as an offering to the Buddha. The offering of burning incense (*suvanda dum*) and 'luxurious' perfume over the sacred footprint is also made. Now the sacred footprint and its shrine are completely transformed into a 'Buddhist footprint' and that transformation is further established by placing an image of Buddha over the sacred footprint.²⁰⁴ This transformation is not only clearly visible at the footprint shrine but also in the whole temple (*maluva*)

²⁰² According to Seneviratne the washing of the sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha is symbolic: 'the image of the casket is symbolically washed in the mirror' (1978:59). At the sacred footprint it is the actual print that is washed.

²⁰³ This facsimile of the Buddha's footprint consisted of one hundred eight auspicious objects (*magul lakunu*).

²⁰⁴ Placing Buddha's statue in the shrine is a recent practice - in fact it started in the late 1990s.

premises as well. The upper courtyard area (*uda maluva*) is well decorated with Buddhist flags, yellow flags and other traditional art motifs. The attention is now paid to the shrine of the guardian deity Saman, where installation ceremony (*tānpath*) of the deity images takes place. This shrine was reconstructed in its present form in 1938, and until 1940 only the sandalwood image (*handun deva rūpaya*) of the god Saman had been customarily installed in this shrine. But in 1940 a fairly large silver image of the god Saman began to be installed at this shrine as part of the commencement ceremony²⁰⁵. Whatever the origins of these images, like the motorcade procession, the installation ceremony of deity images has only recently become public. According to a member of the temple staff, before the early 1990s the ceremony was confined to the temple staff.

In 2002, fairly large crowds participated in the deity installation ceremony at the Sri Pāda temple. Most of them gathered right in front of the deity shrine to witness the installation ceremonial procession. Some were holding fruit trays (*pūjā vatti*) over their heads, and some were holding bunches of lotuses to offer to the god Saman at the completion of installation ritual. In the ceremonial procession, all the temple staff dressed in white and their heads were covered with white turbans. In front, the chief of the lay staff (manager) carried the relic casket on his head and held it with both hands in great respect. Behind him, the sandalwood image of the god Saman was carried by the chief *kapumahattaya*; after him the second *kapumahattaya* carried the pinnacle (*kota*) which was later placed right on top of the deity shrine; he was followed by the silver image of the god Saman, carried by four temple staff members; right in front of the procession drummers were kept drumming. Soon after the procession arrived at the shrine, a senior monk took the relic casket and placed it in the highest place of the shrine while the congregation cried '*sadhu, sadhu, sā*'. Next, at an auspicious time, the chief *kapumahattaya* of the deity shrine carefully installed the images of the god Saman. Meanwhile, the second *kapumahattaya* of the shrine placed the pinnacle (*kota*) on top of the shrine roof. Both ritual acts marked

²⁰⁵ Paranavitana has identified this image is identical to one that was installed by the minister Devapatiraja in the thirteenth century (1958:48). But villagers in the Palabaddala have different stories about more recent origin of this image.

the symbolic presence of the god Saman at the Sri Pāda temple, at least for a period of six months.

The final event of the inauguration ceremony is the first offerings to Buddha and the god Saman. The offering to Buddha (*buddha pūjā*) is made at the footprint shrine with the participation of a fairly large congregation led by the Trustee monk of Sri Pāda temple. At the deity shrine the chief *Kapumahattaya* performed the offering (*deva pūjā*) to the god Saman, which concluded by planting a large plant (*kannalavva*) to bestow the god Saman's protection of the temple staff and pilgrims who would be visiting the temple during the next six months. Soon after the inaugural ceremony, the footprint shrine and the deity shrine are opened to worshippers for the first time.

Unlike the inaugural ceremony, the concluding ceremony at Sri Pāda temple, which usually marks the end of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage, surprisingly has still not been constructed in a ceremonial manner. On the day after the Vesak full moon in May - just after the usual morning ritual - the images of the god Saman are moved from the shrine at an auspicious time and taken back to the Sri Pāda Buddhist centre at Nallatanni where the grand celebration of escorting the god Saman back (*deviyan āpasu vādamavima*) to the Pelmadulla Galpottawala temple takes place. Like the commencing ceremony, this ceremony is also not an 'old' event, but was introduced by a self-motivated group of traders in Nallatanni with the help of higher ranking government officials in the area in 1998²⁰⁶. Prior to this the sacred objects were carried to Pelmadulla without public ceremony. Today, this ceremony is quite similarly to the commencement ceremony in which the motorcade (*riya perahāra*) procession has become the central event of the ceremony. Hence, I have no intention to describe this procession here, in which I participated in 2002. The politico-cultural motivations behind these new grand festivities will be explored at the end of this chapter.

²⁰⁶ The District Secretary of Nuwara Eliya has strongly supported this event.

5.6 The Actors of Revitalizing ‘official religiosity’

During the jurisdiction of Dhammānanda (1954-1970), like the temple administration, a new version of the ‘official’ ritual domain was introduced by Dhammānanda with the assistant of the temple Trustee, D.C. Wijewardene²⁰⁷. Under Dhammānanda’s instruction, Wijewardene made a new version of ‘official’ ritual practice for Sri Pāda, just as he did for the Kelaniya temple near Colombo (see Walters 1996). In other words, Wijewardene designed ‘official’ ritual practices (e.g., daily services to Buddha or *buddha pūjā*) based on practice at the Kelaniya temple. Kelaniya is not quite a “national” Buddhist centre in post-independence Sri Lanka but it has become a centre to the self-glorification of one particular low-country family, the Wijewardene-Jayawardene family.

My point here is that the ‘official religiosity’ we see today at Sri Pāda temple is a remarkably “modern” one compared to the ‘official religiosity’ lucidly described by Seneviratne (1978) at the Temple of Tooth Relic at Kandy, Evers (1972) at the Lankatilaka at Kandy and Nissan (1985) at the Bo Tree Temple at Anuradhapura. It does not mean that the Sri Pāda temple had no ‘traditional’ “official religiosity’. Many versions of it can be found throughout its remarkable history. For example, as I have discussed in chapter 2, under the ‘Saranamkara-Kriti Sri reordering project’ a new version of ‘official religiosity’ was introduced to the Sri Pāda temple, the last effort to reformulate the so-called “traditional” ‘official’ ritual version under the Buddhist kingship. The bitter disputes irrupted between different groups of monks and different powerful lay elite groups in Kandy, Ratnapura and Colombo (see chapter 3), in my view, would probably be the central cause for the downfall of so-called “traditional” ‘official religiosity’.

Elizabeth Nissan (1985) has observed a somewhat similar situation at the Bo Tree Temple at Anuradhapura, but as for her the ‘traditional’ temple organization at the Bo Tree Temple was founded in the mid nineteenth century, after the British colonial state codified aspects of traditional practice and fixed custom once and for all, giving

²⁰⁷ Interviews on 30th Sep. and 20th Oct. 2001 with Rev. Kudagoda Hemaratana who served as the executive monk (*krutayadhikari*) at Sri Pāda under Dhammananda from 1955 to 1970 and also from Dhammananda’s only pupil, Rev. Pinnagoda Sumanatissa on 13th Nov. 2001.

it the force of law. Though the ‘colonial endorsed model’ at the Bo Tree Temple was challenged by alternative formulations of traditional organization, at least “a kind of traditional internal ritual structure” was negotiated and had emerged around the mid nineteenth century (1985:117). But at the Sri Pāda temple “a kind of traditional internal ritual structure” didn’t emerge until the mid twentieth century, in other words until Dhammānanda’s reordering project.

My point here is that the ‘official religiosity’ that Dhammānanda initially brought into the Sri Pāda temple, with the help of Wijewardene from the Kelaniya temple, was itself a “modern version of traditional” temple rituals. Walters describes the major events in the emergence of “modern Kelaniya”, starting with Mrs. Wijewardene who laid the foundation for the new temple in 1927, and her son, Don Walter Wijewardene, first president of the lay trustee organization (of which Upali, and afterwards his brother, were presidents), the *Sri Kalyani Raja Maha Vihāra Dayaka Sabha*, who inaugurated the annual Duruthu Perahāra (relic procession) in that year, and then in 1937 a formal consecration of the Kelaniya temple (1996: 99). We can see some parallels in the emergence of a new version of ‘official religiosity’ at both Kelaniya and Sri Pāda with the rise of Buddhist cultural nationalism in the country. But unlike Kelaniya, there is no annual procession at Sri Pāda temple. There is no powerful *dayaka sabhava* (lay Trustee organization) at Sri Pāda; instead temple affairs are organized and managed under the centralised authority of the chief priest of the temple. Hence, unlike Kelaniya and other main temples in Sri Lanka, the lay influence and the state patronage on Sri Pāda temple affairs is relatively absent. So, it is under the chief priest Dhammānanda and his successors ‘official religiosity’ that we see today at Sri Pāda have been constituted.

5.7 Conclusion

To sum up, I have explained throughout this chapter and the last chapter how Sri Pāda temple was constructed as a hegemonic Buddhist sacred site after the country’s granted political independence from the British empire. Interestingly, this new ‘re-ordering’ project became more visible after the mid 1950’s, without much state intervention. During this period, the ‘official’ discursive practices of rituals, ceremonial and administrative affairs of the temple, as well as the physical

appearance of the temple, have been repeatedly framed or remade and transformed into something predominantly Buddhist. As I have demonstrated throughout these two chapters, the idea of creating Sri Pāda temple as a hegemonic 'Buddhist site' was first articulated in the mid 1950's, at a time when new forms of Sinhala Buddhist identity were developing in the country. One self-motivated monk, Morontuduve Dhammānanda, the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple (1954-1970), became a key figure in formulating a new version of Sri Pāda and later his successors totally transformed Sri Pāda temple as fully-fledged Buddhist site. The Sri Pāda that was (re) created in the decades after independence, as I have demonstrated, does not represent a return to any original forms that had historically existed there. It was, rather, a new creation with a concrete manifestation of postcolonial ideas about Sinhala Buddhist identity. But as I argue, unlike other major sacred sites in the country, the creation of the Sri Pāda temple as hegemonic Buddhist site did not happen under the support of the Sinhala Buddhist propagated postcolonial state but surprisingly it was shepherded by the chief monks whose gained the 'power' to control Sri Pāda temple after the mid 1950's. During this period²⁰⁸ various less affluent individuals, groups and institutions, which directly or indirectly connected to Sri Pāda temple affairs have been supported to make the 'sacred footprint site' a predominant Buddhist site.

One area of such dominant reconstructions project is clearly visible in 'official' religious affairs. Under such official religiosity new elaborative annual ceremonies such as inaugural and concluding ceremonies, nationally important *pōya pinkama* and other public and private Buddhist ceremonies were introduced and organised. Similarly, I have shown that the administrative aspect of Sri Pāda temple affairs is also entirely reformulated as the modern bureaucratic form but always operate under the jurisdiction of the chief priest of the temple. Above all my focus in last two chapters has shown the process in which Sri Pāda temple has been made or remade as a hegemonic 'Buddhist site', not especially through state intervention but through influential local actors.

²⁰⁸ In the popular level number of films, poetic texts, popular songs have been made to emphasis the Buddhist aspects of Sri Pāda.

Chapter 6: The Temple to Pilgrims: Some features of the 'Journeying Aspect' to Sri Pāda

In the first part of this dissertation I dealt with the 'historical development' and 'official' religious practices of the Sri Pāda temple with little attention to the issue of pilgrims and their practices. In that part, I showed how different Sri Pāda Temple have constructed, reconstructed or ordered, and reordered under different powers at different historical moments in the temple history. I also gave an account of how Sri Pāda has been historically viewed as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious site and how that multiple discursive and non-discursive practices have been contested and marginalized with the insurgence of the Sinhala Buddhist Nationalism, particularly in postcolonial Sri Lanka. Though all sorts of 'bitter' disputes, contestations, antagonism and exclusion have been transpired in the 'official' domains at Sri Pāda Temple, the continued attraction of the large number of 'pilgrims' mainly from 'peasant and working class backgrounds' of all nominal religious affiliations is remarkably impressive. Obviously, the majority crowd is represented by the Sinhala Buddhists, the largest religious group in the island. But as I have shown in the first part of the thesis, Sri Pāda has historically been viewed as one of the popular plural religious sites on the island²⁰⁹. But today it has been (re)ordered as predominantly Buddhist site hence my discussion in this section largely concentrate on Buddhist pilgrims.

Unlike other Buddhist pilgrimage sites on the island such as Kandy, Anuradhapura, and Kataragama, Sri Pāda pilgrimage has never been abandoned²¹⁰ despite the political difficulties that have arisen since it was firstly institutionalised as a popular

²⁰⁹ 1911 census report has also thrown some light on this regard: within a day 1,765 pilgrims were enumerated and among them 1,605 were Buddhists, 101 Hindus, 53 Muslims and 6 were Christians and 87 whose birthplace was India (Denham 1912). These figures, no doubt, are reflecting the multi-ethnic and multi-religious nature of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage in the early 20th century. But today picture is not so convincing; according to the simple survey (here after Simple Survey 2002) that I have conducted at the Sri Pāda Temple shows only 44 out of 924 pilgrims whom I briefly interview were non-Buddhists.

²¹⁰ Kandy disappeared as a festival centre in the nineteenth century, to rise in importance again after the 1920's, and the 1950's, particularly (Seneviratne 1976) whilst Anuradhapura became increasingly important as a popular pilgrimage site in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth (Nissan 1985, 1988). Likewise, Kataragama is said to have declined as a pilgrimage site from the early nineteenth century but became of major site for Buddhists in more recent decades (Obeyesekere 1977, 1978, 1981)

pilgrimage site during the kingship of Vijayabahu I in early 12th century. The factors that have affected the attendance numbers, and led to occasional breaks in Sri Pāda's popularity, have been insurgencies, outbreak of epidemics and unexpected weather conditions. Pilgrimage to Sri Pāda has otherwise remained a popular attraction to many people in Sri Lanka regardless of their religious faiths. The impact of such aforementioned factors on the popularity of other pilgrimage sites is no way comparable with that of Sri Pāda pilgrimage. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight some remarkable features of the journeying aspect of Sri Pāda pilgrimage, which are rarely found in the journey to other major pilgrimage centres in the country. In Sinhala Buddhism, journeying to major pilgrimage sites is popularly known as *vandanā gamana* literally means 'worshipping journey'²¹¹. There are sixteen such major pilgrimage sites (*sōlōsmastana*) in the island where Buddhists would go on *vandanā gamana* in their lifetime. Without doubt Sri Pāda would be one of the most important sites for such journeying, with the sentiments of great devotion as well as the great care.

My purpose for focusing on the journeying aspect of Sri Pāda pilgrimage is a reaction to the visible lack of ethnographical information dealing with 'journeying aspects of pilgrimage' in the context of ethnographic studies of Sri Lanka in particular and South Asia in general. However, Ann Gold (1988), Valentine Daniel (1984) and Alexander Gath (1998) studies are notable exception in this regard. The work of Ann Gold is a village-based ethnography, which includes extensive discussion of the rapidly expanding form of motorized pilgrimage undertaken by villages in her fieldwork area. In contrast, Daniel's study focuses on a walking pilgrimage to the Sabari Malai, one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in South India, in which Daniel participated fully with a group of village pilgrims. Gath's study is based on a group of Syrian Christians of Kerala in South India in which he discusses the varieties of pilgrimage experience in Central Kerala. Although there are notable studies on major pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka (e.g., Obeyesekere 1966,

²¹¹ Gombrich mentions that pilgrimages had taken place in Sri Lanka from time immemorial (1991:128-129). He also describes a Sinhala book, *Baudda Adihilla*, from the medieval period, that gives the particular forms of worship to be performed at the different pilgrimage sites in the country. Similarly, a well-known 16th century book, *Nam Potha*, gives a catalogue of sites to be visited by Buddhist pilgrims. This list includes Sri Pāda and almost all the sites that are popular today.

1978, 1981; Seneviratne 1978; Nissan 1988), surprisingly, the ‘journeying component’ of those sites has not been fully explored or more precisely, has not been strongly emphasized. Therefore this chapter goes somewhat towards bridging this gap, in highlighting this very important aspect of my project.

I should stress that this chapter is primarily descriptive in intent, although the material I present shows some changing visage of the journeying aspect of Sri Pāda pilgrimage. This chapter will provide some basic background information to the next two chapters where I intend to discuss pilgrim worship at Sri Pāda temple in detail. In doing so, I endeavour to explore some of the issues in the analysis of Buddhist practice which have not been discussed to date in the literature in anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism.

6.2 The pilgrimage season

In common with several other major pilgrimage sites on the island, there is a particular time of year when Sri Pāda pilgrimage takes place with a strong seasonal bias. The main pilgrimage normally takes place during the months of December to May, however the busiest part of the year extends from February to April, with the peak of the pilgrimage season during at the festival of Mādin full moon day in March. At this time, crowds are extremely dense for three or four days. In general, the large crowds can always be expected in February to April, which is quite different to the popular times for visiting other national pilgrimage sites in the country. Kataragama, Kandy even Mahiyangana fill with large number of pilgrims during their festivals, which fall during August and Anuradhapura on the full moon in June. However, Sri Pāda continuously attracts thousands of pilgrims at least during these three months²¹². In this period, the heavy rush and pilgrims trafficking is quite normal.

²¹²It is hard to find early statistical figures on the pilgrims’ attendance at Sri Pāda. However, some British ‘official records’ have arbitrarily reported figures in qualitative manner, for example “full swing crowds” “many thousand” “large number” and this may give us some indication about the scale of the pilgrimage in the nineteenth century (SLNA 45/37). In the early twentieth century administrative record provides some estimated figures on pilgrims attendance; in 1905 12380 pilgrims were visited to Sri Pāda, the figure rising to 40,000 in 1913 (AR 1912/13). By 1921 during February to April the number was 13,650 (AR 1921). In 1937 Government Agent of Sabaragamuwa reported “The annual pilgrimage to Sri Pāda assumed *large proportion* in comparison with past three years” (AR 1931). By 1968, it was 600,000 to 700,000 (Daily News, 22 Dec. 1969). According to police estimation during

According to temple staff, neighbouring villagers visit the temple either before the large crowds arrive at Sri Pāda or afterwards, when the number of pilgrims has gradually died down at the end of season. The temple staff believed that during the months of February and March the large crowds visiting were mainly from the densely populated and highly urbanised western parts of the country, whereas towards mid April pilgrims largely came from the Southern part of the island. As one put it: In January, I see most of the pilgrims (*vandanākārayo*) turn to Sri Pāda from Kandy, Matale, Navalapitiya (central province) and Ratnapura-Kuruvita area (Sabaragamuva province), in February, areas like Panadura, Kalutara and Gampaha, and in March people from Colombo [all from Western Province]. In April, most of the pilgrims come from the Southern province, even among them people from down south (*giruva pattu*: e.g., Beliatta, Tangalle and Tissamaharama) visit Sri Pāda at the end of April, and their visit usually marked the end of pilgrimage season.²¹³

This view is corroborated by traders and local villagers as well. The religious behaviour of those regional pilgrims groups at Sri Pāda will be examined in chapter 8. During the off-season (*avāraya* opit. *vāraya* 'season') which runs June to November [the period of unfavourable monsoon weather conditions] local pilgrims do not go on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda although, a considerable number of foreign tourists have been known to visit Sri Pāda during this period. According to my observations, during the off-season the temple is almost an empty place. As Valentine Daniel (1990) reminds us 'Sri Pāda [and Kataragama] are meaningless without participation'.²¹⁴ Though human participation at Sri Pāda during this period is markedly absent, the staff of the temple firmly believe that divine figures, mainly the guardian deity of the temple, Saman, fully occupied the place and protect the

the 2000-2001 number of pilgrims attended at Sri Pāda was 2.2 million, a figure that, if true, would indicate that one eighth of the total population of Sri Lanka is visited to Sri Pāda.

²¹³ Communication with Rev. Kalawane Pannatissa on 12/01/02.

²¹⁴ 1990: 23

sacred footprint. So this suggest that the power of the Buddha, in fact his relic, has been continuously maintained through both the 'divine' and the 'human' participation at Sri Pāda. In my view, both 'divine' and 'human' participation at Sri Pāda cannot be absent at the same time because the credibility of the Buddha's power at Sri Pāda would become unstable. That is why in the absent of human participation, the divine participation at Sri Pāda becomes absolutely necessary. Hence, Sri Pāda is by no means an empty place, it is the place where both divine and human are uninterruptedly invoke the power of the Buddha through participation. The only human being present at Sri Pāda during the time of the constant participation of the divine is that of the temple watcher. He was assigned there for a six months period to safeguard the temple. During this period, according to the watcher, the foreign tourists, a few groups of local youths as well as a small number of pilgrims do occasionally visit Sri Pāda. He stated that the pilgrims groups turn up mostly on the full-moon days. Apart from that during this period Sri Pāda temple remains largely absent of the human being.

6.3 Modes of Journeying

During the pilgrimage season, particularly during the months of February and March or maybe longer extra trains²¹⁵ carry pilgrims from Colombo to the hill plantation town Hatton. From there public and private buses operate to Nallatanni. In addition, public buses run to and from both northern and the southern pilgrimage bazaar towns [Nallatanni in the north and Palabaddala in the south] at the base of Sri Pāda mountain. The bulk of pilgrims however, visit the small bazaar towns by coaches, or vans (pilgrim buses), usually distinguished by the bunch of young coconut or areca flowers stuck in their front fenders. From there the pilgrims start the actual pilgrimage on foot, way up to the mountain top temple. This is no doubt the most arduous part of the journey.

²¹⁵ In 1990, according to General Manager of Railway, 330,000 passengers were transported to Sri Pāda and back as compared to the 265,000 passengers during 1983 (Daily News, 15th April 1990). I have no more recent figures.

In the past, the entire journey to Sri Pāda must have been a major expedition with pilgrims trekking on foot. Elderly informants today tell of travelling from their villages by foot or bullock cart along set routes, stopping by certain pilgrims' rests (*ambalama*) for cooking, eating and resting, and when reaching villages of Sri Pāda mountain based the journey began entirely by foot. This was mostly in the night with help of torch light (*pandam*), through forests infested with elephants, leopards, bears and other less dangerous creatures. The paths were narrow; rugged and rocky and they some time used iron ladders and chains to overcome the most difficult and deadliest parts of the journey and that included crossing rivers and streams before they reached Sri Pāda temple. The journey could last many days and a safe return could be unpredictable. The pilgrimage to Sri Pāda was often considered to be the last journey of the devotee, and some are said to have made their last will, before undertaking the journey.

Today the situation is rather different. Although pilgrims have to climb a few miles to reach Sri Pāda temple, they can easily reach the 'pilgrimage bazaar towns' at the base in a matter of hours by bus, train or van. The road and railway²¹⁶ networks began to expand into this area in the late nineteenth century as a result of converting thick forest areas into commercially viable tea plantations under the British. Thus, the duration of travelling has been scaled down from weeks or days to a matter of hours. Today, the whole journey may last for a maximum of two days and the risk has been drastically reduced due to the introduction of safety measures in the last few decades. These include bridges, stone steps, and handrails on the most difficult parts of the pilgrimage paths, where, in the past, many pilgrims faced fatal falls²¹⁷. Additionally since lighting up the pilgrims' paths in the early 1950's many pilgrims have begun to travel in the night to Sri Pāda without much risk, although according to my older informants, even before electricity came to Sri Pāda most of the pilgrims used to climb Sri Pāda mountain during the night with the help of torch light

²¹⁶ In 1911, G.A of Sabaragamuva reported "The new railway to Kuruwita brought up a number of pilgrims from Colombo" (AR 1911/12).

²¹⁷ Major Forbes mentions, that in 1815, "several natives were blown over the precipice, and yet continued clinging to one of the chains during a heavy gust of wind; but in such a situation, no assistance could be rendered, and they all perished". Similarly, John Davy (1821) informed, two fatal falls during the climbing. Skeen reported, that in April 1869, three pilgrims were blown down the precipice by the force of a fierce storm (cf. Skeen 1870:211).

(*pandam*). Unlike in the past however, today many pilgrims would not describe the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda as a “risky journey”. As Dubisch (1995) claims, just as anthropological attention to pilgrimage has grown, so has pilgrimage itself flourished. Pilgrimage has adapted to a purportedly secularising world and has even benefited from contemporary modes of transportation and communication. Overall, pilgrimage is often more organized, easier and safer than in the past.



6.1 A group of ascending pilgrims



Picture 6.2 A group of descending pilgrims

6.4 The Atmosphere

Prior to the pilgrimage season, preparations began under the supervision of District Secretaries [Government Agents] of Ratnapura and Nuwara Eliya and other higher officials in order to provide water, sanitation, electricity, clearing and renovating pilgrims paths, repairing pilgrims rests (*ambalamas*) as well as arranging security for the large crowds expected at Sri Pāda. Also, people in neighbouring small bazaar towns are busy preparing to reopen their shops, which have been closed during the off-season. During the pilgrimage season, a trading area springs up, both in the small bazaar towns (Nallatanni and Palabaddala) and along the pilgrim paths, particularly along the northern pilgrimage path where the large numbers of pilgrims are expected to be climbing up. Plots for temporary stalls were allocated by auctions at the Ratnapura and Nuwara Eliya District Secretaries Offices under which, the Sri Pāda mountain area is administered, but stalls near to the temple area are separately auctioned by the temple authorities. Stalls were not permitted in the sacred area, but

as I noticed a profitable 'coffee shop' was run in the lower courtyard (*pahala maluva*) area by the temple authorities. The temple administration does, however ensure a mark off between a 'profane' area of commercial, secular interests, and 'sacred' space (cf. Stirrat 1982). Most of the stalls along the pilgrims' paths sell foodstuffs, coffee, tea and soft drink at high prices; the higher up the mountain the higher the price. In addition to food and drink, requisites for offerings such as flowers, joss sticks, camphor and packets of needles and thread were also for sale at some stalls. In the bazaar towns, all sorts of goods were for sale: clothes (warm and rain), foodstuffs, sweets, bright jewellery, picture posters, music tapes and more. Local traders and traders who arrive from all over the island sell these items during the pilgrimage season. There are also, some private companies who run stalls in a competitive manner in order to sell ointment products for pilgrims as a remedy for physical pain and difficulties experienced during the sacred journey. Several voluntary organizations also provide 'First Aid' services to pilgrims free of charge. The northern bazaar town, Nallatanni, has the more commercial activities, with as much spirit as those seen in the bazaars of big cities, when compared to southern Palabaddala. However when large numbers of pilgrims are gathered in the area, both places have a festive atmosphere.

Some people however are not interested in the commercial activities and are more keen to engage in pious activities. Among them providing free foods and drinks for the pilgrims is worth briefly noting here. This pious collective activity is popularly known as *dansala*. The local authorities in the both administrative Districts allocate permits for such *dansalas*, which are more visible only at the time of Mädin (March) full moon day festival at the temple. In 2002, nine permits were issued only for *dansalas*²¹⁸ organised along the southern pilgrimage path, but there were more than this number operating along the both sides. *Dansalas*²¹⁹ are alms halls, providing food and drinks for pilgrims free of charge. Usually, they are organized by lay Buddhist organisations whose members raise funds and provisions, and work

²¹⁸ Nissan reports (1985) more than fifty *dansalas* operate during the Poson festival at Anuradhapura.

²¹⁹ *Dansalas* at Sri Pāda operate and organize similar way that Nissan (1985) describes at Anuradhapura *dansalas*.

voluntarily during the festival days. At Sri Pāda some organisations have managed to build permanent structures for their annual *dansala*. For *dansala*, they make collections in their home areas of both money and goods and operate for two or three days. Each has a name and is held annually. Whilst some have only started recently others have been operating for more than twenty years or so. A chief organizer of one particular *dansala* who was from the north of Colombo claimed that his father was the first to begin *dansala* in 1934. In 1979 he took it over from his father and was continuing it for the 70th time with the help of his friends. Help for pilgrims in this way is highly meritorious, and the people involved in the *dansalas* combine their work with pilgrimage, at the end of *dansala* take chance to worship Sri Pāda themselves. The organising of *dansalas* is not uncommon among the Buddhists when they celebrate the major religious events such as *Vesak*, the day that Buddha was born, enlightened and died.

6.5 The Nature of Pilgrim's Group

So far I have described general characteristics, which are directly or indirectly connected with the journey to Sri Pāda. Let me now turn to describe more specific features of the journey. Generally speaking, going on pilgrimage must be always collective and pilgrimage (*vandanāve yāma*) to Sri Pāda is no exception. According to older informants, pilgrims groups were formed around close relatives and sometime fellow villagers and friends. A group of pilgrims is called *nade*, and the person in charge is known as *nadeguru* (lit. the teacher of the pilgrim's group). During the pilgrimage, nobody would have the courage to question the authority of the *nadeguru* and pilgrims would have to obey him, respect him and conduct themselves according to his word. This arrangement goes against what Victor Turner calls 'communitas'. The structure and the operation of '*nade*' certainly do not fit into the Turnerian framework. For now, I argue that going on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda does not achieve 'communitas,' but it rather creates new forms of 'societas', but which are markedly different from the 'mundane structures' or 'normal society'. However, as I will explain later, newly emerged pilgrims' groups (e.g., youth pilgrims) do maintain some form of 'communitas'. As I go on to show the hierarchical arrangement of the

‘traditional’ *nade*, mostly the role of the *nadegura*, has been severely challenged by the newly emerged pilgrims’ groups, particularly the youth pilgrims’ group.

In *nade* or pilgrim’s group, apart from the *nadegura* (traditionally always a male figure), two types of pilgrims can be identified. The first is those who have never been to Sri Pāda, generally called *kodu*²²⁰ [*kāraya*] meaning ‘newcomer’; if he or she is an older person they would be called *dandukodu* meaning ‘adult newcomer’, and if a child they would be called *kirikodu* generally meaning ‘child newcomer’. *Kodukārayas* were always under the special care of the *nadeguru*. The other type of pilgrim included in a *nade* is generally known as *purudukāra*, meaning experienced or veteran pilgrims²²¹. A *nadegura* informed me that a person becomes a *purudukāra* pilgrim only after finishing his or her third journey to Sri Pāda. So, traditional pilgrims’ groups were structured and operated through these distinctions, with the *kodukāra* and the *purudukāra* subjected to the authority of the ‘*nadeguru*’. During the journey, *kodukārayas* were always placed in the front of the pilgrim’s groups and *purudukāra* walked behind, but in front of the *nadeguru*, who gave all instructions and directions from the back. In a *nade*, *Kodukāra* could be easily identified by their appearance. Usually they dressed in white and sometimes covered their head with a piece of white cloth identical to a headscarf. Also a *kodu pandura*, a coin wrapped up in a piece of white cloth, was usually tied to their left wrist or forearm (This coin would later be offered to the temple). Such, symbolically distinctive features would no doubt create some form of ‘social’ distance, rather than ‘commonality’ between the *kodukārayas* and the veteran pilgrims, as well as the *nadegura*. Furthermore such a distance can be identified in different situations. For example at the end of worshipping at the Sri Pāda temple, it was a practice that each *kodukārayas* would kneel down in front of the *nadegura* and respectfully worship him in order to show

²²⁰ Words such as ‘*kodu*’ and ‘*nade*’, according to literary scholar Udaya Meddegama, are not found to have any relation to Pali or Sanskrit roots but these words, he suggests, may have a Tamil origin (Email conversation on 23rd Oct, 2003).

²²¹ Markus Aksland (1990), who has documented his journey to Sri Pāda with a pilgrim group in Southern coastal town, finds slightly different language for *kodukārayas* as ‘*kodi*’ and *purudukaraya* as ‘*vadi*’.

their *gratitude*²²². So far I have presented a typical structure of a pilgrim's group in order to show its functions and internal hierarchical differentiation in the operation of *nade* in the journey of Sri Pāda. This is different from the situation discussed by Valentine Daniel (1984:244-278) for pilgrim groups journeying to Sabari Malai, a Hindu pilgrimage site in South India. He identifies himself as a member of a village pilgrim's group, 'the pilgrim leaves behind his temporal, differentiated identity and exists only as the atman, a pure, unmanifest, and undifferentiated form of substance. It is no longer meaningful to speak of self or other or of perception, since there are no distinct entities to perceive' (1984: 270). Pilgrims journeying to Sabari Malai, according to Daniel, are equal or undifferentiated: no social or symbolic differences prevail among them, everybody is addressed as "Ayyappa Swami" and wearing similar cloths (*vesti*) with holy ashes across their chests and foreheads, and the consecrated beaded necklace. None can command an Ayyappan pilgrim even when they belong the lowest caste group. Such equal or undifferentiated 'communitas' is/was hard to find among pilgrims to Sri Pāda, which has/had been subjected to the authority of *nadegura*.

It is hard to trace genealogy of figures like *nadegura*, *kodukārayas* and even *nade*. I am sure these are not recent innovations. Hence, organising a pilgrim group around *nadegura* no doubt is a 'traditional' phenomenon. The general feature of going on pilgrimage among Sinhala Buddhists is the accompaniment of a veteran *nadeguru* who expected to have good knowledge about the major pilgrimage sites and be skilful in conducting certain rituals appropriate to the site. In particular, their service and organizational ability is quite prominent in the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda where special care and guidance throughout that sacred journey is much required. Taking pilgrim groups to the great sacred sites in the island particularly Sri Pāda would be considered a highly meritorious act.

²²² Similarly, there was another practice that *kodukārayas* take on as a treat for the fellow pilgrims on their way back from the temple. This treatment was popularly known as *kodu dāne* (lit. almsgiving of *kodu*) and was usually given with a specially prepared 'sweet ball' known as *kodu aggala* (*Aggala* is made out of jaggery, ginger, pepper and rice flour) but instead of *aggala* many pilgrims now use biscuits and other sweets for this treatment.

But I suspect that more organised pilgrimages around *nadegura* became popularly visible with the advent of 'modern' transportation and communication systems on the island. According to my older informants they were going on pilgrimage with their fellow villages by buses, usually hired by *nadeguras* from private bus companies²²³, which could have easily accommodated forty to sixty pilgrims. No doubt with the advent of 'modern' public transportation particularly trains and buses, more such large scale "pilgrims tours" might have been organised and parallel to this the importance of the *nadegura*'s role in the whole journey must also have increased. The emergence of such motorised pilgrimage has attracted large groups of pilgrims to scattered sixteen great sacred sites (*sōlōsmastana*) - most of these ancient sites were reinvented and transformed into national pilgrimage sites by mid twentieth century (Nissan 1985, 1989, Kemper 1991) - of the country and journey to those sites is popularly known as '*vata vandanava*' (lit. circle pilgrimage) in which *nadegura*'s role has become so important.

However, today we see a rather different picture as far as the journey to Sri Pāda is concerned. Many people now prefer to go on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda not in large groups but instead with a smaller number of people, particularly their immediate family members or close relatives²²⁴. Some especially young pilgrims prefer to travel with their friends, schoolmates and fellow workers. As my survey²²⁵ information

²²³ They named few of them: Ebert Silva, South-Western bus company of Cyril De Zoysa, Swarnapali. But among them only Ebert Silva bus company has survived today.

²²⁴ This is quite similar to the process of scaling down of the organisation of traditional rituals such as *bali-tovil* from communal to private domain in contemporary Sri Lanka (Simpson 1995, De Silva 2000).

²²⁵ This was not a random survey but rather a sample of those who were willing to talk to my assistant and myself and had the time to do so. This survey was carried out over some weekends and holidays during the months of January to May 2002. To collect numerical data at a major pilgrimage site is by no means an easy task. Large numbers of pilgrims come and go and the interviews took place in an extremely busy situation, particularly after the long and tiring climb of the mountain. There is also limited space at the temple, preventing the pilgrims from staying long at the premises. In view of such difficulties, it is hard to judge how far the information obtained was reliable. Nevertheless, for what they are worth the figures are presented in this and coming chapters. In all, we interviewed around 924 pilgrims groups. But we deliberately excluded foreign nationals who visited to temple as tourists rather than pilgrims. Given that pilgrims tend to arrive in groups, we tried our best to ensure that members of the same group were not interviewed more than once *at different times or over and over again*. Hence, 924 individual pilgrims are representing some form of 924 pilgrims groups though they answered the questions individually.

(hereinafter referred to as Simple Survey 2002) shows nearly 75% of pilgrims journeyed to Sri Pāda in fairly small groups that consisted of 2 to 20 members, the rest were made up of larger groups. The scaling down of the size of pilgrims groups has considerably undermined the role of the *nadegura*.

Table 6.1 Size of the Pilgrim Groups

	Frequency	Percent
0-1	54	6
2-10	337	37
11-20	351	38
21-30	58	6
31-40	47	5
41-50	29	3
51-60	24	3
61-70	10	1
71+	14	2
Total	924	100

Source: Simple Survey -2002

Today many pilgrim groups are not guided by a veteran *nadegura*. Instead, small pilgrim groups now enlist the services of an experienced fellow pilgrim who can pass on basic instructions to fellow members (particularly the *kodukāra* pilgrims) in their journey to Sri Pāda and other major sacred sites too. This experienced figure could be an elderly male or female pilgrim and sometimes quite remarkably less experienced younger figures carry out a similar role within the group that they themselves have formed. Interestingly, I observed at Sri Pāda, that experienced female figures in these small groups were visibly engaged in providing ritual instructions for their fellow pilgrims, a role formerly need by veteran male *nadeguras*. This dramatic transformation can be illustrated to some extent through the following two cases of experienced female *nadegura*.²²⁶ One female was from

²²⁶ There is no specific name for female *nadegura*; hence I have therefore called them 'female *nadegura*'.

Ratnapūra in the Sabaragamuva province and the other from Matara in the Southern province:

B.S. Fernando is a 51 year old woman who came to Sri Pāda as a *nadegura* with a small group of pilgrims from Ratnapura where she lives and runs a flower-selling stall near the main shrine of the god Saman. Since 1983 she has taken this pilgrims' group to Sri Pāda every year, a group which usually consists of her family members, relatives and neighbours. From her childhood, she used to accompany her father to Sri Pāda - was also a veteran *nadegura* and a skilful carpenter from Kahapola, Piliyandala, near south of Colombo - which enabled her to learn some basic skills in guiding pilgrims' groups to Sri Pāda. After the death of her father in 1971, she continued to guide the same pilgrim group that he had guided, until she moved to Ratnapura in 1982. According to her calculation, as a *nadegura* she has visited Sri Pāda 24 times so far.

The second female *nadegura*, Mango Nona age 72 from Dikwella, Matara, in the Southern province gave me the following account.

This is my thirty-fifth visit to Sri Pāda. I began to visit Sri Pāda about fifty years ago, but some years I was not able to come here. I used to come with a *nade* of fellow villagers. My father was the *nadegura* of our *nade*. Before my father, my grandfather had taken the *nade* from my village to Sri Pāda. Nobody in my family wanted to become *nadegura* after my father. My brothers all went on fishing in the sea like my father [She has four brothers and she is the youngest and only girl in her family]. My father wasn't keen to teach me how to become a *nadegura* but I taught myself by going on pilgrimage with him. He took us to all the major pilgrimage sites (*Sidastāna*) in the country. It was a journey of eight days [*vata vandanava* or circle pilgrimage]. Those days we went even to *Nāgadepa* [another major Buddhist site in Jaffna peninsula] and Seruwavila [in the east coast].

Since 1985, I began to take our *nade* on that journey but we don't go to Nagadepa and Seruwavila today. We first come to Sri Pāda and then go to other pilgrimage sites (she named a few; Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa,

Mahiyangana, Mutiyangana, Maligavila). I don't take other *nada* (plural form of *nade*) on pilgrimage and I only take our *nade* [which according to her always consisted of her children, grand children, relatives and neighbours. When I met her at Sri Pāda she was leading the *nade* of 70 pilgrims]

Though some women have taken over the 'traditionally' male dominated role of the *nadegura*, some fascinating changes have emerged among the youth pilgrims groups, where new types of pilgrim's leader seem to have become apparent. The expressive role and the responsibilities of this new figure are entirely different from the 'traditional' *nadegura*.

The newly emerging '*nadegura*' in most of the youth pilgrims groups is popularly known as [in English term] either 'manager' or 'leader'. The manager is the person who is temporally selected amongst the experienced members of group. His responsibility is very simple in comparison to the 'traditional' *nadegura*. Basically, his task is to manage and maintain the collective fund of the pilgrimage group, which is normally collected from the fellow pilgrims before the journey begins. The money is for spending on travelling, food, cigarettes, liquor, and sometimes the expenses of unemployed members of the group. Such newly emerged youth pilgrim groups both implicitly and explicitly have challenged the highly restricted and authoritative role of 'traditional' *nadeguras*. Veteran *nadeguras* are constantly ridiculed through a hostile song that is widely popular among the youth pilgrims groups:

nadegura harima *hōra* (the *nadegura* is a real cheater)
apiva dāla pānala *giya* (who left us and ran away)

The general attitude on *nadegura* seems to me significantly have changed over a period of time. The most commonly heard criticisms of them are of drunkenness, rudeness and misuse of pilgrims' money. This is not to say that all the veteran *nadeguras* are like this; despite the fact that they constantly receive criticism, some of them still manage to bring fairly large pilgrims groups to Sri Pāda. Interestingly, some manage to attract a considerable number of youth pilgrims into their respective pilgrims groups too. One striking feature that I commonly found among them is that within a particular pilgrimage season they bring several pilgrim groups to Sri Pāda. They organise such journeys to Sri Pāda not necessarily because they want to make

merit (*pin*) as 'traditional' *nadegura* did, but because organising such journeys seem to have become commercially profitable for them. Hence, bringing pilgrim's groups to Sri Pāda by those veteran *nadegura* today cannot be seen as purely a meritorious act. I have met several such veteran *nadeguras* who have been bringing pilgrim groups to Sri Pāda for many years. As I describe in the cases of female *nadegura*, most of them have become veteran *nadeguras* through their involvement as a young member of the pilgrim's group that had been guided for many years by their father or father's fathers or any other relative in their respective villages. They went on pilgrimage with them not only to Sri Pāda but also to other popular pilgrimage sites in the country where they learnt much of the art of guiding pilgrim's groups, and the required skill for performing certain required rites during the pilgrimage and inside the actual pilgrimage sites. Unlike their predecessors, today they organise more pilgrims' groups to sacred sites like Sri Pāda with some commercial interest and their service appears to have gone beyond their own village based pilgrims' groups. Though they openly claim their act as a meritorious one, the unspoken story behind organizing such journeys to pilgrimage sites, particularly to Sri Pāda, goes beyond that claim.

Some aspects of this can be illustrated by a brief case study of a particular veteran *nadegura* that I interviewed in his 'village'.

Appuhamy is a veteran *nadegura* aged 80 who lives in a rapidly changing industrial area of Biyagama, just 15 km to the east of Colombo in the highly populated Western Province. So far, Appuhamy has visited Sri Pāda 168 times, more than twice his current age. He is well built and still a strong man and when I first met him at Sri Pāda he was on his second journey of that year [2002]. In the previous year he had visited Sri Pāda 7 times with different pilgrims' groups.

As a seven-year-old boy, Appuhamy first went on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda in 1930. That was with his grandfather who created a pilgrim group of fellow villagers at that time. After that he accompanied his grandfather on that annual pilgrimage to Sri Pāda, as well as the village pilgrimage to other sacred sites in the country. He gave credit to his grandfather from whom he learnt so much in order to become a reputed *nadegura* in the Biyagama area.

As a young boy, Appuhamy went into military service in 1951. This was his first job, and he served for twenty-seven years until his retirement in 1978. Soon after retirement, he began to work a plot of paddy land, which he had inherited from his parents. After the death of his grandfather in 1965, he initiated a plan to take the village pilgrim group on pilgrimages, particularly to Sri Pāda, and continued to do so in quite a systematic way after retiring from the military service. Unlike his grandfather, Appuhamy's reputation as an experience *nadegura* spreads beyond his village. Thus many pilgrim groups seek his services as a *nadegura* on their annual pilgrimage to the various sacred sites in the country. Moreover, in each year he organises for himself several journeys to Sri Pāda from which he believes that he makes much merit (*pin godak*) for his next life. Appuhamy still takes the pilgrim group of his fellow villagers to Sri Pāda, as his grandfather did, but today that journey is largely confined to his extended family that consists of his fourteen children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In addition to this special journey he recently began to organise somewhat commercially oriented journeys to Sri Pāda for an entirely different social group, namely factory workers who have temporally migrated into his area, Biyagama, to work in the newly emerged manufacturing zones²²⁷. The large influx of workers, particularly female workers, into the area, allows Appuhamy to organise "journeys" [religious journey combine with pleasure] to Sri Pāda for them. In average, with the support of one of his son, he annually organises four to six such journeys to Sri Pāda and these are often large pilgrim's groups sometimes exceeding one hundred and fifty members. Usually he charges a considerable amount of money [current charge is Rs. 400 which in comparison to their low wages is quite significant since to earn this amount is hardly an effort] from each member for the overnight journey to Sri Pāda, which includes travel cost, and the breakfast the following morning. I later

²²⁷ The rise of export-oriented manufacturing zones in Sri Lanka became apparent after the liberalization of its economy in 1977 and such manufacturing zones have profoundly affected its society, especially in the urbanised areas of the Western Province where many of them are located. These manufacturing zones attract large numbers of workers, particularly young unmarried women. In mid 1980's such manufacturing zone was opened up in the area where Appuhamy's family has been living for generations. No doubt this must have profoundly affected their day-to-day economic and social life.

found out that like the other *nadeguras* of his type, he sometimes arranges refreshment for the pilgrim groups at the food selling outlets (*kade*), which have sprung along the pilgrimage paths during the season and where *nadeguras* usually get a substantial amount of commission from the outlets owners. Appuhamy said that, as a cost cutting measure, he takes those “worker’s pilgrims groups” to Sri Pāda through the quickest, safer and shortest North or Hatton pilgrimage path. But interestingly, he takes his own family pilgrim group to Sri Pāda through the longest and most difficult southern [Ratnapura or Kuruvita] paths as his predecessors did. Also he believes - as other pilgrims who take the southern path- that one can only make enough merit by climbing by the most difficult path rather than easier path.

His stand is clear. He undertakes two kind of journey to Sri Pāda; one is a journey of merit making and the other a journey of money making. He spoke about youth pilgrims in general and youthful worker’s pilgrims with whom he visits Sri Pāda, aware that most of those who travel with him do not take the sacred journey seriously. He however, wants them to carry out, at least the important rites both during the pilgrimage and inside the temple. He does not consider the way back from Sri Pāda as strictly religious, and this is where most of the young pilgrims who accompany him have the chance to enjoy themselves in the way that they mostly seek as members of his parties. He is aware that, without giving, willingly or unwillingly, at least some such freedom, he would not be commercially successful in organizing such journeys.

The above example shows how the traditional *nadeguras* operate in the context of their ‘traditionally’ defined roles, now challenged by the newly emerged female and youth leadership among the pilgrims to Sri Pāda. To some extent they have adjusted to new situations, moving from ‘traditionally’ defined merit-making service to commercially important services. In this chapter I have spent considerable time describing the role of the *nadegura* whose character has anthropologically not been documented so far. Let me now turn back to highlight other features of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage.

6.6 Pre-journey Rites and Preparation

Before undertaking the Sri Pāda pilgrimage or *vandana gamana* there are certain rites to be performed and certain things to be carried with the pilgrim groups. According to an older informant, they basically took substantial amounts of raw food, mostly rice and vegetables, and other requisites for cooking, including utensils and even firewood. At certain pilgrims' rests or teashops, however, such utensils are some times provided for a reasonable charge. Items of refreshment such as tea and coffee together with specially prepared sweets popularly known as *aggala* with plenty of pepper, and *inguru dosi* with much ginger, were essential on a pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. As offertory items, coins (*panduru*), [areca] flowers, pieces of white cloth, coconut oil, incense sticks (*handun kuru*) and herbal plant (*beheth badu*) were also taken to the temple. Traditionally all the necessary things that were required during the sacred journey and the offerings at the temple were put into specially prepared two pouched cloth bags called *sehälluva*, (lit. a light-weight bag; though usually packed with heavy things)²²⁸. Today most of the items that required for the journey can be purchased even at Sri Pāda.

On the eve of the pilgrimage, most of the pilgrims would go to the village temple, where they would worship and wish for a safe journey and often a vow would be specially made to the deity Saman and other guardian deities to be released on their return home. Richard Gombrich, who went to Sri Pāda with a group of villages in the central hill country in the mid 1960's, did not report that any rite had taken place on the eve of the pilgrim's departure but he went on to say 'On leaving Migala for Sri Pāda no one ever dreamt of bothering with our local god but on our way we stopped in Kandy to pay our respects to the Buddha at the Temple of the Tooth' (1971:112). Similarly, Markus Aksland who climbed Sri Pāda in late March 1986 together with twenty four pilgrims from a southern coastal town did not report that they had visited

²²⁸ This is similar to the cloth bag (*iru muti*) taken by pilgrims go to Sabari Malai in South India as described by Daniel (1984: 247-48). But like Sabari Malai each pilgrims going to Sri Pāda does not take a separate cloth bag on their head, instead there are one or two people to carry the *sehälluva*, usually called '*sehällukāraya*'. Though the *sehällukāraya* can still be found in some pilgrims groups today, carrying a *sehälluva* is far from a common practice among Sri Pāda pilgrims. Instead, most of them commonly carry required things themselves in easily discarded bags (*sili sili*). These have contributed to one of the severe environmental problems of the sacred mountain area.

a local temple before their departure but did mention they performed such a rite at their first stop at a temple in Matara (1990:51-53).

Despite these cases, in general pilgrims used to employ “pre-journey rites of protection” at their local temples, or carry out other rites before going on pilgrimages, particularly pilgrimages to Sri Pāda. Even today most pilgrims either visit local temples, or perform a simple act of worshiping at their home shrine before the eve of their departure to ensure protection for their safe return home. But at the same time, however, a surprisingly large number of pilgrims visiting Sri Pāda today do not perform such protective rites at all. According to my survey information only 27% pilgrims carried out protective rite at their respective local temple before they left for Sri Pāda. Instead most of them (30 per cent) simply worshiped or prayed for a safe journey at their home shrine.²²⁹ Though considerable numbers of pilgrims, (31 per cent) say they do not perform any form of rites before they leave home (I suspect most of them are youth pilgrims), still a large number of pilgrims seek some kind of a ‘religious favour’ on the eve of the departure from their homes to Sri Pāda.

Table 6.2 Number of Pre-journey rites undertaken

	Frequency	Percent
No	283	31
Shrine at home	279	30
Visit temple near by	245	27
Bless from parents and elders	29	3
Shrine at home and blessing from parents and elders	39	4
Went to mosque	1	0.1
Just think of Buddha and God	25	3
Consecration before coming	20	2
After offering light to Jesus	2	0.2
Worship at Hindu Kovil	1	0.1
Total	924	100

²²⁹Such home based shrines can be found in almost all the houses in Sri Lanka and usually consist of an image of Buddha and other popular deities of modern Sri Lanka. According to Obeyesekere popularity of such shrines is a clearly visible feature of “modern Buddhism” (1972).

Table 6.2 clearly shows the different kind of 'rites', which are currently performed today before going on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. But one most striking feature that emerges from this information is that many people begin their journey to Sri Pāda today without undertaking any protective rite at their respective local temple, as many would have done in the past²³⁰. Rather many prefer to do it simply and privately, some times at their homes or sometimes simply not carrying out any form of ritual before the departure from their homes.

Table 6.3 Religious places of visit on the way to Sri Pāda

	Frequency	Percent
Not visit	553	60
Visit to Main pilgrimage sites	52	5
Temples and Deity shrine on the way to Sri Pāda	319	35
Total	924	100

Interestingly, as table 6.3 shows only 40 per cent of the pilgrims to whom we spoke have visited temples or deity shrines on their way to Sri Pāda, however we must bear in mind that pilgrims who travel by public buses or trains would rarely get the chance to visit such places. 60 per cent reported that they came directly to the pilgrimage bazaar towns at the foothill of Sri Pāda without visiting any religious places on their way to Sri Pāda. This shows that the pilgrims who come to Sri Pāda today may not be as concerned with the temples on their way, particularly the shrines of the territorial deities, as their predecessors. Before discussing this point one thing that needs to be immediately clarified is that on our survey we did not count the acts of simple coin (*panduru*) offering and stand by the pilgrims, like other ordinary travellers do when they are passing 'traveller protecting temples'²³¹ that can be found along the major road's sides in Sri Lanka. However we did consider formal visits to a shrine(s) or a temple(s) on their way to Sri Pāda. In general, it is a common practice for people going on pilgrimages to visit the main shrines and the temples that they

²³⁰ Unlike the pilgrims travelling to Sabari Malai (Daniel 1984: 247-48), pilgrims who go to Sri Pāda today seem to me to be less interested in carrying out such initiation rites publicly.

²³¹ Among them; *Kalutara Dagaba* and *Sinigama* along the Galle-Colombo Road, *Gatembe* on the Kandy-Colombo road, *Puwakpitiya* on Ratnapura-Colombo road, *Ella* on Ratnapura-Panadura Road, *Tanivella* on Chilaw-Colombo Road are worth noting here.

pass by, especially when they are undertaking a risky and arduous journey like the one to Sri Pāda. This might be, as Walters explains, associated with certain dangers in travelling such as the dangers of entering foreign lands, of leaving the domains that are protected by one's chosen deity, of encountering malefic forces like the evil eye or much more real dangers involved in modern travelling (1995: 45) (or might be generally making merit?). Similarly, Obeyesekere shows pilgrims going on pilgrimages that hardly ever ignored their local, regional and national deity shrines or temples. Focusing on the annual pilgrimage to Mahiyangana (regional deity; Saman) and Kandy (national; Buddha's relic) from the village Laggala (local deity; Bandara) in late 1950s Obeyesekere argues that pilgrimages move people from the specificities of village religious practice to centres where "the national Buddhist idiom is expressed" (For example, Mahiyangana and Kandy). Whether pilgrimage heightens a sense of national Buddhist unity and integration is questionable and this issue needs to be addressed separately. What is important in Obeyesekere's argument is that he states that visiting these sites were "obligatory" for villages (1966:19-24). Such an obligation seems to me to be less vital for pilgrims travelling to Sri Pāda, demonstrating less concern over deities other than the god Saman, under whose jurisdiction Sri Pāda temple is to fall. Hence, as my survey information shows, formally visiting other major deity shrines or temples on the way to Sri Pāda is becoming a less important practice among Sri Pāda pilgrims. It seems as though Sri Pāda pilgrimage is now regarded as a single straightforward journey, which does not require much attention to attending other religious sites on the way or beyond it. Therefore, although features of Obeyesekere's model might have been found among pilgrims journeying to Sri Pāda in the past such practices are seemingly becoming less important for the pilgrims journeying to today's Sri Pāda.

6.7 Special vocabulary and Self-restraint

Another remarkable feature in the journeying to Sri Pāda is the use of a special vocabulary that is rare in other pilgrimages and in every day discourses. The whole pilgrimage was characterized by severe self-restraint, in thought, word and conduct. A certain form of vocabulary had to be used on the journey: the words such as

‘*bēha*’[can’t], ‘*ēpa*’ [don’t] and ‘*nāha*’ [no] could not be used²³². The use of the wrong word is generally known as ‘*katavāradima*’ (lit. mouth slipping). For example one cannot say “I can’t climb this mountain” or “how can I climb this mountain” or the other way around “It is simple for me to climb this mountain”. Such a statement would be designated inappropriate in journeying to Sri Pāda. Usually, pilgrims were expected to be courteous, kind and patient, particularly after entering into the jungle territory of the deity Saman. Within his territory, the word ‘*karūnavayi*’ (lit. compassion, kindness) could be the most frequently used word, a word also used more generally throughout the whole pilgrimage. For instance, if the path may be crowded, there was no pushing or jostling instead used the one word *karūnavayi*! *Karūnavayi*!²³³ (The word has different meanings but in this context, its means ‘please’ ‘please’) then the addressee always makes room for the speaker.

Similarly, *karūnavayi* is also used in a scenario when pilgrims ask to ‘please climb’ or ‘please go up’ (*iḥalata karunā karanna*) or ‘please go down’ (*pahalata karunā karanna*). Also pilgrims constantly utter the word *karūnavayi*, throughout the journey when they ask for ‘the protection’ or ‘help’ (*pihita*) or kindness from the territorial deity Saman. A veteran pilgrim informed me that pilgrims frequently utter the word *karūnavayi* because it is directly connected with the god Saman. For him the god Saman is the god of kindness and without his kindness people would not be able to visit Sri Pāda. As a tribute to him people utter *karūnavayi* and refrain from using inappropriate words against him. Similarly, Paranavitana shows that ‘the devotee wending his way to the Footprint shouts *karūnavayi* as an invocation to the god on the Peak [Saman], and not in reference to Buddha as an embodiment of compassion’ (1958: 54). Hence *karūnava* or compassion in Sri Pāda context would be understood as the most intrinsic quality of the god Saman. That is why we don’t hear this word in other major Buddhist sites where the god Saman is not so powerfully represented.

²³² Stirrat reports exactly the same linguistic usages amongst Catholic pilgrims to Talavila and Madhu (1982: 396).

²³³ One of my informant said that in such situations some pilgrims use the word ‘*sanhīde*’ which is similar to ‘let me go up or go down’.

This central moral quality of the god Saman, I will discuss in the next chapter. Such an intrinsic quality of the pilgrimage site is constantly expressed through the devotional language and restrained behaviour of pilgrims.

Such ways of using different devotional language is a prominent aspect of the journey to Sri Pāda and is not found at other Buddhist pilgrimages sites in Sri Lanka. But self-restrained behaviour of pilgrims is far from common among pilgrims to Sri Pāda today. This is quite visible in the language that is used by the youth pilgrims. They have shifted into much more simple day to day language instead of relying on specific devotional language, which as I have briefly outlined above, has become inherent in the journeying to Sri Pāda. The most frequently used words like *karūnavayi* are hard to hear in the normal conversation between and among the pilgrim's groups particularly youth pilgrim's groups. This aspect of use of specific language and their changing visage will be further discussed when I present the language of the devotional songs that are sung during the climbing to Sri Pāda temple.

6.8 What route needs to be taken?

As I mentioned elsewhere, pilgrims approach the Sri Pāda temple through two different paths. The southern or Ratnapura path is twelve kilometres and other, the northern or Hatton path, is less than 7 kilometres. In addition to these two, there are four footpaths²³⁴ operating from the neighbouring villages that join the main pilgrims path before they reach Sri Pāda temple. Among them the westerly Kuruvita path is attractive to pilgrims more than neighbouring villages and is an eighteen kilometres track. But most of the pilgrims who come to Sri Pāda approach through its northern footpath, beginning at Nallatanni bazaar town (Hatton) or from the southern footpath, which starts at a small bazaar town, Palabaddala (Ratnapura). According to my elderly informants, their fathers and father's fathers used to climb Sri Pāda through the most difficult southern path. The reason expressed for choosing the most difficult

²³⁴ They are; Malimboda footpath, which is connected half way to the Kuruvita path, Happugastanna path connects to Ratnapura path just a few meters before the temple and Rajamale path connects to Hatton path about a kilometre to the temple.

path was an entirely religious one²³⁵. They believed that by climbing through the southern path one could acquire utmost merit (*pin*) rather than take the comparatively easier, safer, shorter and also highly commercialised 'modern' path of the north side (Hatton). The Southern path (Ratnapura) was recognised by the older informants as the royal path ('*raja para*') where they believe kings used to take their pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. In fact, according to a folk story Buddha himself climbed Sri Pāda through this path. Hence, there is a moral justification to taking the most difficult southern path. Furthermore, the journey is seen as being of as much significance as worship of the 'sacred footprint', and the greater the difficulty of the journey, the more merit (*pin*) the pilgrims would receive, through what they call '*pin gamana*' or merit-making journey²³⁶. Such effort, traditionally taken by the pilgrims to Sri Pāda was not so concerned with finding a solution for mundane matters such as health, jobs, economic problems or family troubles but rather with acquiring much merit in order to achieve "the other worldly" matters such as expecting a good life in the next birth or to achieve final release of '*nirvana*'.

Table 6.4 The Main reason to take the Hatton (northern) path

	Frequency	Percent
No reason	24	4
Convenience	360	52
Close by	218	33
Travelling by train to Hatton	34	5
To see the road	9	1
Beautiful road	1	0.1
Other came	25	4
Total	673	100

²³⁵ But, interestingly, another obvious reason given by one of my older informant is that approaching Sri Pāda via plantation town Hatton was not easy until 1950's because estate owners used to charge 'road tax' from the pilgrims.

²³⁶ Daniel highlights a similar stance among the pilgrims he studied, about the path taken to Sabari Malai. He noted 'the forty-seven-mile...path is circuitous and goes up and down several hills...but our path though less travelled... was special, because it is the very path that Lord Ayyappan walked on his way to Sabari....we became special pilgrims...for our efforts we gained special rewards and privileges..' (1984: 249). Here the physical pain is not recognised as what Daniel (1984) describes as 'divine love' but as a way of acquiring merit.

But today most of the pilgrims prefer to climb the easier, safer, and shorter northern (Hatton) path, not only because, the path is more “convenient” (52%) and “close by” (33%) than the southern path, but because I would argue, that unlike pilgrims in the ‘past’ today most of the pilgrims who come to Sri Pāda are not so interested in “other worldly affairs”. Rather they are much more interested in the mundane or “this worldly” affairs. In other words journey to Sri Pāda is not fully understood today in terms of acquiring merit, as most of the pilgrims would have done in the past. Hence, my point here is that most of the pilgrims might not take the most difficult (time consuming) twelve kilometres long southern path (only 160 out of 924 came to Sri Pāda through this path) because acquiring much merit doesn’t help them to solve the rising new mundane problems that they are facing today. However, this is not to say that the primary motivation of pilgrims today is their day-to-day problems only. There are also some elements of performances at the temple, which are mainly “other worldly affairs”, the two obvious examples being the ‘*pinkama*’ (merit making ceremony) and *dansala*, which are organized or sponsored by some pilgrims to Sri Pāda temple.

But the point I want to make here is this ‘in the past’ pilgrimage to Sri Pāda was entirely a journey of acquiring a substantial amount of merit²³⁷ (which is why older pilgrims call it as ‘*pin gamana*’ merit making journey) for dealing with ‘other worldly affairs’. Hence they preferred to take a much more difficult path as they believe they could acquire “utmost merit” (*uthum pinak*) out of such a challenging, arduous journey to Sri Pāda. But today the journey to Sri Pāda temple cannot be understood only as the related to affairs of the “other world” or ‘spiritual’ matters, because the spiritual aspiration of the journey has been overtaken by the seek of solutions regarding to their “this worldly” [material] matters. More precisely, the matters relating to personal and family crisis also include some extremely mundane desires such as seeking ‘pleasure’. Hence, my interpretation is that today most of the pilgrims choose the convenient and the shortest Northern path because they might urgently need to bring their personal and family problems to the “Buddha” or relic of

²³⁷ Ananda K. Coomaraswamy (1908: 110) identifies the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda as journey of acquiring merit and the transferring merit [to deity].

the Buddha and the deity Saman whom they believe have the 'divine power' to solve those new problems (I elaborate this point in the next chapter). Also, quite interestingly, some pilgrims particularly young pilgrims see the journey to Sri Pāda as a 'pleasure trip' (*vinoda gamana*) rather than the merit making journey (*pin gamana*). Hence, these groups are so keen to take the popular, less 'suffering' and 'convenient' northern path instead of the 'inconvenient', more 'suffering' and hence, less popular southern path. Even temple's authority has given much preference to the easier, safer, and shorter northern path in their official and day today activities of the temple.

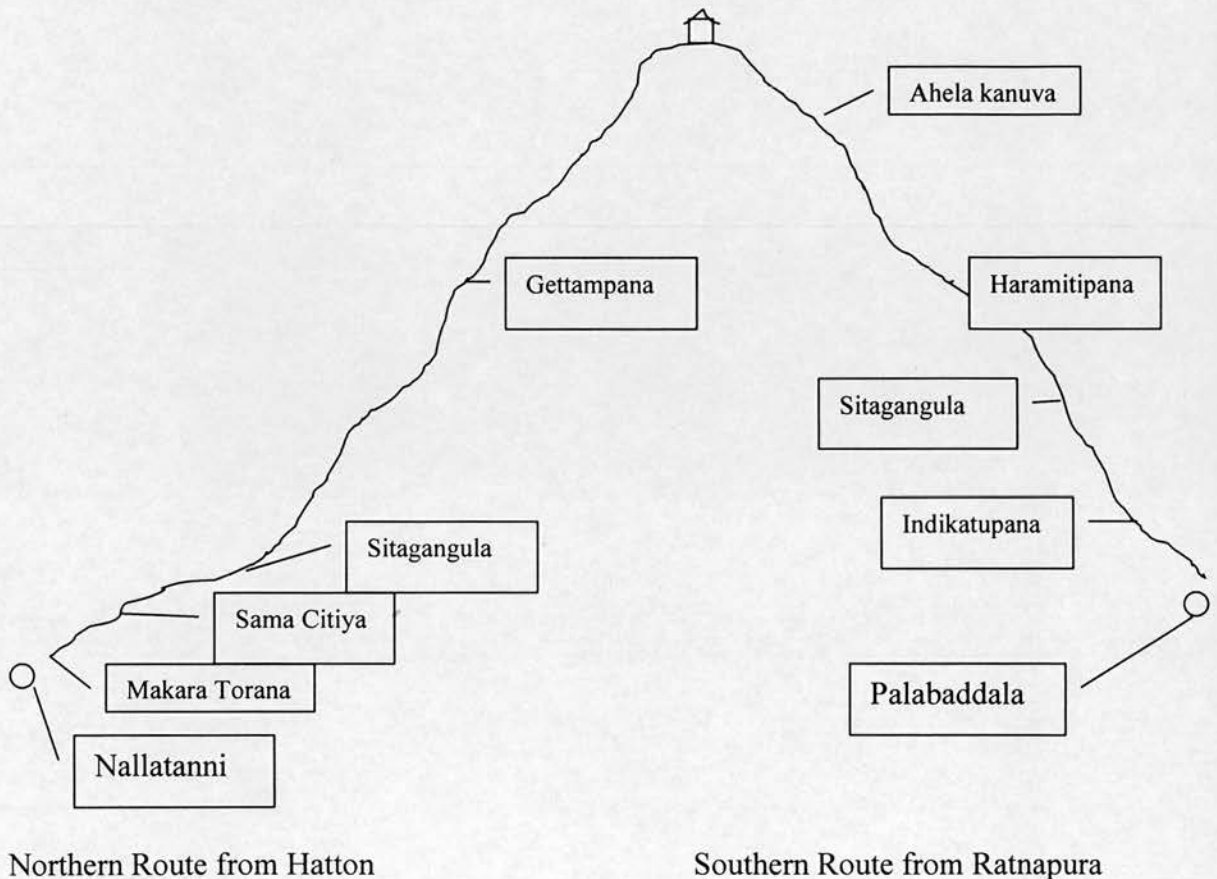
6.9 The Rites to be Performed During the Journey

Another remarkable feature of Sri Pāda pilgrimage is that during the climbing, mostly as a group (*nade*), there are several rituals to be performed before reaching the mountain top of Sri Pāda temple. Pilgrims perform these rituals at various religiously important places, regardless of the path they have taken to reach the temple. Interestingly, the rituals that they perform at these places cannot be found at other pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka; they are mainly oriented to Buddha and the territorial deity Saman. This point will be explained later, but first let me briefly introduce the important places where most of the Buddhist pilgrims perform rituals before they reach to Sri Pāda temple (see **Map 6.1**).

On the Southern side, Palabaddala is where the pilgrims perform their first ritual, in a temple, before they commence the journey by foot. Pilgrims first go to the Buddha's shrine (*budu ge*), there they take Three Refuges and Five Precepts usually offered by the *nadeguru* or veteran pilgrims. Then, they go to the shrine of deity Saman where a priest of the deity or *kapumahattaya* usually intones the *kannalauva* (plaint) for the deity Saman to ensure the safely return of the pilgrim's party. A similar ritual also takes place on the north side at a temple in Nallatanni, but unlike Palabaddala the Five Precepts are usually offered not by a *nadegura*, but by a Buddhist monk who runs the "new temple" for that purpose. At both places pilgrims offer coins (*panduru*) to the deity Saman to assure his protection and also *kapumahattayas* usually put a red mark (*tilaka*) on the forehead of each pilgrims to seek further blessing from the deity Saman. The main purpose of performing such a ritual is to

ask 'protection' (*ārakshava*) of the guardian deity of Sri Pāda territory. The pilgrims would transfer merit that they would make through the sacred journey, to the deity Saman for the protection that he gives them throughout the sacred journey.

Figure 6.1-The main places of pilgrim stop



The rite at Sētagangula

The next most popular stop is the Sētagangula, where an icy cold stream babbles amidst rocks and stones. The pilgrims, particularly *kodukara* pilgrims, usually take a ritual bath here and change their dress with fresh white clothing, observing five precepts (*pansil*) and offering *panduru* (coins) to the deity Saman, before starting the further climb. However, some pilgrims don't take a bath at the Sētagangula, but instead just wash their faces and refresh themselves. In the case of *kodukārayas*,

either an elderly person or *nadegura* usually applies a piece of lime (*dehi*) on the head of *kodukārayas* before he or she has a ritual bath. After that, *nadegura* or whoever is in charge of the group, usually ties a 'protective coin' (*āraksha panduru*). This is for seeking 'extra protection' and is particularly important for some members in *nade* such as the *kodukārayas*, pilgrims who feel unwell and particularly women who pass their menstruation period. The ritual performed at the Sētagangula²³⁸ is predominantly a 'purificatory ritual' where pilgrims clean themselves (as one informant notes: 'wash their sin (*pau*) away'), dress in clean clothes and secure the 'extra protection' before beginning the further ascent. There is no noticeable difference in this ritual performance between the south and the north sides of Sētagangula, however on the north side, pilgrims meet Sētagangula before they start the actual climb whereas on the south they arrive at this ritually important place after climbing a few miles on their way to the Sri Pāda temple.

The rite at the needle Rock

The next popular stop of their journey to Sri Pāda is at the Gettampana (lit. rock of stitch) [such similar place can be found in the northern path but it is called: Idikatupāna (lit. needle rock)], where the Buddha is said to have mended his robes. Pilgrims engage themselves in imitative activity mostly by *kodukārayas*, and then the needle and thread are discarded thereafter. Interestingly, if pilgrims take the south route they meet Gettampana before the Sētagangula, whereas on the north side it is the other way round. Generally, at both places where pilgrims actually perform, is that they stretch one or two lines with thread in a needle between two wooden posts²³⁹ to commemorate [as they believe] what Buddha exactly did at this particular

²³⁸ One informant told me about one particular myth associated with the Sitagangula. The story is that king Ravana of Lanka after abducting Sita kept her in captivity at a place close to Sri Pāda mountain, and one of the places she frequented was Sitagangula where she bathed. Hence this place called Sita+gangula.

²³⁹ Some pilgrims groups who come from the Southern province of Sri Lanka perform this ritual in a slightly different way: instead of stretching a thread between poles, the kodu members in the group make a circle and bind themselves by passing the needle thread to each other. The nadegura who is already in the middle of the circle recites a verse repeatedly while the kodu pilgrim's dance until they break away from the thread that packs them together. Soon after kodu pilgrims respectfully bow down to the nadeguru to please him, which normally marks the end of the southern version of the ritual at the Idikatupana.

place. During this performance some recite a verse which summaries what Buddha himself did at this particular place:

Our lord Buddha (*muni raja*) visited Gettampana
And he sat on the rock, with thread and a needle,
Was mending his robe, when Vasavarthi came to attack him,
He defeated Vasavarthi by his virtue (*anuhas*) and continued
[ascending]

According to popular interpretation of this verse Vasavarthimaraya (the eternal enemy of the Buddha) came down as a severe flood and then Buddha bent over and made a semi-circle in front of him with the needle: thus the water parted and through this act Buddha defeated Vasavarthimaraya. By performing such a ritual, pilgrims would not simply commemorate the Buddha's act at the Gettampana but also they might realise the supreme 'power' of the Buddha.

After Gettampana, near to the sacred mountain top, where the path becomes more difficult and precipitous, we see another place where a different kind of ritual takes place. This place is called '*āhala-kanuva*' (lit. pillar of *āhela* tree) but today there is no pillar of *āhela*²⁴⁰ at the place. Instead we see a small stone pillar at which pilgrims take five precepts (*pansil*) and some made promises (*divirima*) to refrain from 'bad practices' such as drinking alcohol, smoking and gambling by putting a mark of lime (*hunu or chunam*) on the stone pillar before the final ascent. Hence, some call this place *divirum gala* (lit. place of making promises). However, in comparison to the southern pilgrimage path, the northern path has no such popular place for this ritual²⁴¹. Nevertheless, visibly, rituals perform at the Sētagangula and Gettampana are the most popular among today's Buddhist pilgrims to the Sri Pāda temple.

²⁴⁰ *āhela* is the name of a tree, which gives flowers also known as *āhela* which only bloom in the month of *āsala* (June/July)

²⁴¹ But there is a teashop very close to the mountaintop, the name of which is *ehala kanuva kade* (boutique of ehala kanuva). The shop owner has also placed a similar *ehala kanuva* on the north side but it is a wooden one. According to my observation this place has so far failed to capture the attention of pilgrims as it has on the south side.

Apart from this, on the southern path some pilgrims stop at the place called Haramitipana (lit. rock of walking stick) but rituals are no longer performed at this place as they were in the past. In the past pilgrims offered walking stick to the deity Saman to seek extra protection from him but today this place is only popular among pilgrims as the main resting place. However, in the northern path, at the Gettampana, pilgrims still offer walking sticks during the *gettam* ritual. William Skeen (1870:192), who refers to a friend of his who had been to Heremitipana twenty-five years (1845) before him, give us some light on the ritual that he had performed at this place:

A friend who made the ascent some five and twenty years ago, informs me, that iron rods, to be used as walking sticks, used to be sold to the pilgrims at this station, at the rate of a six-dollar, or 1s.6d. each: and that on the arrival of the pilgrims at the footprint, they made offering of these sticks to Sri Pāda. When as many as fifty were thus collected, they were sent back to Heramitipana, by an agent of the priest, to be re-sold; and this would happen three or four times a day, or even more frequently, according to circumstances. The revenue from such a source must have been pretty profitable, as long as it lasted.

Skeen did not mention the sticks offering however, but instead he reported Haramitipana as the place where pilgrims began the 'lighting of the torches' (ibid.). It is hard to find when and why the ritual of sticks offering disappeared at Heramitipana. But as an integral ritual practice in Sri Pāda pilgrimage, the offering of *heramiti* or walking sticks is still performed as a part of the ritual of *gettam* at the Gettampana as well as at the shrine of the deity Saman in the Sri Pāda Temple. According to the *kapumahattaya* at the deity shrine, most of the pilgrims offer (symbolic) walking sticks to the deity Saman in order to obtain his protection during their journey to the Sri Pāda temple. Like the *gettam* ritual, the offering sticks is mostly performed by the *kodukārayas* either they before reaching to the Sri Pāda temple or at the shrine of the deity Saman in the temple as an offering of their gratitude to the deity for helping them to reach at the sacred footprint of Buddha.

There are other important places²⁴² passed by the pilgrims in their journey to the Sri Pāda temple but those places are not as ritually important as the above mentioned places. However, some of those places are important for the pilgrims as the major resting places where large *ambalama* [pilgrim's rest] and tea shops (*kade*) are placed for resting, eating and sleeping whilst some of them are also important for them to occasionally renew the five precepts²⁴³ (*pan sil*) and offering coins to the deity Saman at the small shrines which are dedicated for him at those places [sometimes together with a shrine house for Buddha] before the recommencing of their journey.

6.10 Expressive Devotionals

Like ritual practices, another notable feature in Sri Pāda pilgrimage, is the singing of devotional hymns (*tunsarana*) praising the *tisarana* (three refuge: Buddha, his doctrine 'Dhamma' and his disciples 'Sangha') and invoking the protection of the deity Saman. Also, as pilgrims climb the mountain, they exchange friendly greetings with the 'descending pilgrim's groups' and individuals:

'naginta yana mē nadeta

Sumana Saman devi pihitayi'

'May the grace of deity Sumana Saman

Be with this group which is ascending'.

²⁴² Let me report some of the important places that pilgrims usually pass by in their climbing to Sri Pāda Sri Pāda Temple; firstly on the South side: Palabaddala, Pavanalla, Dorala kade, Kokatiya kanda, Lihinihela, Katukitula, Gatanetula, Kodiya dapu tanna, Diyabetma, Gettampana, Dharmarajagala, Galpotta kade, Nakiya mala hinna, Sitangangula, Hingangula, Heramitipana, Galvangediya kade, Makaratorana, Mella mala kandura, āndiya mala tenna, Ehala kanuva, Hulan kapolla (maha giri damba, ahas gawva) and Maluwa. On the Western side there is another road call Eratna which connects to the Southern path, in that path there is: Eratna temple, Adavikanda, Kakunahinna, Varnagala, Suduwella, Sitangangula, Berumandiya, Demala malahinna, Madahinna, Idikatupana, Ratabalana gala and Galvangediya kade.

On the North side: Nallatanni, Nagavihara, Samavihara, Gangulatanna (sāmi madama), Sitangangula, Golutanna (ratu ambalama), Idikatupana, podi sammadam maduva, Loku sammadam maduva, Maha giri damba, Ehala kanuva kade, Baghava lena and Maluwa.

²⁴³ Gombrich (1971) reports that when he was accompanied by some sixty pilgrims to Sri Pāda, at frequent intervals they repeated the Five Precepts after a *upasaka* (noble man) on their way to Sri Pāda and on the way back (253-254). Taking five precepts on their way back is hard to see among today's pilgrims. Also today pilgrims receive the Five Precepts directly from Buddhist monks who have erected 'seasonal temples' along side the pilgrim's paths with a purpose of collecting money after delivering the Five Precept.

The ascending group immediately gets the reply:

‘nāgala bahina mē nadeta

Sumanana Saman devi phitayi’

‘May the grace of deity Sumana Saman

Be with this group which is descending’

Sometimes individual greetings are exchanged, for example a young pilgrim would greet to an elderly woman:

Vadinnayana mē ammāta

Samma sambudu saranai

‘The mother who goes to worship

May bless by the Buddha’

The elderly woman immediately replies: *ēhema kiuva, ē putāta*

Sumana saman devi phihitai

‘Thus said this son, may grace by the god
Saman’

The singing of devotional poems and exchange of friendly greetings is unmistakably Buddhist and this kind of devotional expression is hard to find in other major pilgrimage sites in the country. Such devotional form of religiosity is not a new innovation as Obeyesekere discusses for pilgrims’ visit to Kataragama, which he terms, ‘*bhakti* religiosity’ (1978). The expressive form of devotionalism, according to Gombrich and Obeyesekere (1988) is a new innovation of ‘the lower class’ urban Buddhists. This is without doubt true for devotees who go to a pilgrimage site like Kataragama. But at Sri Pāda, singing devotional songs and exchanging friendly greetings has always been an intrinsic part of the pilgrimage. Hence expressive forms of *bhakti*-type religiosity of Sinhala Buddhists can not always be seen as a new adoption of changing religious behaviour.

The devotional poems that are sung by Sri Pāda pilgrims have been composed by unknown people, but are surely not the product of elitist composers, such as Buddhist monks and educators, because they were written in simple Sinhala, most probably by ordinary literate citizens. For example: the most popular short devotional poetic

text²⁴⁴, originally a palm leaf manuscript, among Sri Pāda pilgrims called *Tunsarana* (lit. Three Refuges) was written by an unknown poet. However, according to poems ten and eleven of this simple text²⁴⁵, it seems to be written by a grandson of an ordinary literate citizen [Same Mantri] of Tambugala Village and most probably this ‘subaltern’ literally work belongs to the Kandyan period²⁴⁶. However, the singing of poems from this text has now become an uncommon practice among Sri Pāda pilgrims, even though this text is widely available, with several modern editions in print. Instead, interestingly commercially motivated groups are now (mis) using these pilgrim’s poems for their own commercial interests. For example, some recording companies have transformed these poems into more sophisticated audio form and have produced a series of audiocassette of them²⁴⁷. This electronic *Tunsarana*, as I noticed, is now widely available for selling at some shops during the pilgrimage season and also some of these electronically available poems frequently play at shops, stalls and even temples, which have sprung up along the roadside to the Sri Pāda temple. Similarly, a popular local company, which produced “indigenous medicinal products”, has made the textual *Tunsarana* available by displaying each poem together with their commercial advertisement on the way up to Sri Pāda temple. This shows us how the once popularly sung devotional poetic text, ‘*Tunsarana*’ has now shifted away from its importance as a ‘devotional poem’ that

²⁴⁴ The text consists of a hundred and twenty-seven poems and today it is widely available in the modern print form by several Publishers; the poetic text, I refer to here is published by Ratna Prakashakayo, Colombo 10.

²⁴⁵

<i>piyasaka Tambuga</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>vādiviya pāmini nikasa</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>andurēka enda duda</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>madak pavasan nove puraba</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>naming pera isiva</i>	<i>rū</i>
<i>valiyen pali lōka</i>	<i>rū</i>
<i>samē mantri ga</i>	<i>rū</i>
<i>ēvane achāring ge munubu</i>	<i>rū</i>

²⁴⁶ The poem number five indicates that the text was written in the Kandy period:

<i>vikum jaya tedaba</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>utum kara maha vāsa</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>namin Senkada ga</i>	<i>la</i>
<i>veninn nuvarak ēdda lakatu</i>	<i>la</i>

²⁴⁷ The name of the audiocassette series is ‘*purāna tunsarana kavi*’ (the poems of old *tunsarana*) by Alavature Vijithavansa and Distributed by Ransilu.

was made use of by ordinary pilgrims in their journey to Sri Pāda to a more commercially useful 'poetic text' for self motivated commercial groups. This does not mean that pilgrims journeying to Sri Pāda today completely ignore singing such devotional poems, as evidently they do sing devotional poems, but these are not the devotional poems found in the simple poetic texts, like *Tunsarana*²⁴⁸. However, certain pilgrim groups still sing "*tunsarana*" [as I mentioned above the word '*tunsarana*' is used as a generic term for devotional poems that are generally sung during Sri Pāda pilgrimage] but today they sing different forms of '*tunsarana*', which cannot be found in the old devotional poetic texts, like *tunsarana*. For example, as I will explain, a form of *tunsarana* sung by certain youth pilgrims groups is not exactly the same one that is sung by certain elderly pilgrims. The *tunsarana* sung by both the elderly and young pilgrims of today have no relevance with 'old' textual form of *Tunsarana*. Similarly, the so-called "devotional poems" sung by the certain youth pilgrims differ both rhythmatically and contently from the poem sung by certain elderly groups.

Let me now quote some forms of contemporary '*tunsarana*' or "devotional poems" that I have recorded from various pilgrims groups. As in the past pilgrims still sing the devotional poems (but not all the pilgrims are keen to sing *tunsarana*) in the collective manner; the first line of a song would usually be sung by a veteran pilgrim or most commonly by *nadegura* in a certain pilgrims group and the second line is always collectively sung by the group themselves. However, when the pilgrims exchange friendly greetings (another important aspect of the journey) with each other, this always happens not between the member of the same pilgrim's group but with individuals of unknown pilgrims groups. The remarkable feature of these devotional songs, found at Sri Pāda in many forms, is the use of simple every day language, in amazingly short form is yet oriented to Buddha and the guardian deity Saman.

(1) *Apē buddun* – (2) *Api vadinna*
Saman deviyo-Pihita vanna

²⁴⁸ Another popular 'devotional poetic text' among Sri Pāda pilgrims was that the 'Himagatha Varnana'.

God Saman helps us to worship our Buddha

Kiri koduth –Vandavanna

Dandu koduth-Vandavanna

Api hāmoma-vandavanna

Saman deviyo-Pihita vanna

May God Saman help us to worship [the Buddha's footprint]
together with new comers (*kodu*) [to Sri Pāda].

Apē Budun- api vadinna (To worship-our Buddha)

Perali, perali- api vadinna (“ - by Rolling, rolling)

Dana gāgana- api vadinna (“ -by kneeling)

Nalala taba-api vadinna (“ -by forehead)

Sirasa namā-api vadinna (“ -by bowing head)

Dē ath namā-api vadinna (“ -by hands together)

Teluth pudā-api vadinna (“ by offering oil)

Maluth pudā-api vadinna (“ by offering flower)

ēran patula-api vadinna (“ the golden footprint)

Mānik patula-api vadinna (“ the jewel footprint)

Vam siripa- api vadinna (“ the left footprint)

Saman deviyo-Pihita vanna (May God Saman helps us)

These poems suggest highly devotional attitudes toward Buddha and deity Saman. The Buddha is treated as “our Buddha” and asks for special help and protection from the deity Saman to worship him albeit with different postures and different offerings. On some occasion, the descending pilgrim's groups always indicate through the devotional poems that they have finished the worship and encourage the ascending groups to do so. This wishful intension is clearly expressed in the following poem:

Apē buddun- api vānda (We have worshiped our Buddha)

Vadinna yana-mē nadeta (the group is going to worship)

Saman devindu-karūnavai (may protected by the god Saman!)

This friendly greeting is directly sung to a particular *nade* or pilgrim's group. Similarly, sometimes such greetings are used to directly address rather than bless particular individuals in the ascending or descending pilgrim's groups. Interestingly, when such friendly greetings are expressed to particular individuals in the ascending

or descending groups, the caller and the responder always address each other through the use of the every day language of Sinhala kinship. For example, one might call an unknown male pilgrim (possibly judged on his age and his appearance) as *aýya* (elderly brother) as it happens in every day conversation too²⁴⁹:

Caller: *naginna yana mē aýya ta* (the elder brother who is ascending,

Sumana Saman devi pihitai May bless by the god Saman)

Responder: *ēhema kiuvva ē malli ta* (the younger brother who said so

Sumana Saman devi pihitai May bless by the god Saman)

Instead of elderly brother, pilgrims would replace appropriate kinship terms for each caller and the responder such as *malli* (younger brother), *tātta* (father), *siýya* (grand father), similarly if it is a female pilgrim; *akkā* (elderly sister), *nangi* (younger sister), *ammā* (mother) or *accī* (grand mother) etc. What is strikingly important in the use of the language of kinship in more expressive way of the pilgrim's greetings is the recreating rather than obliterating of every day social divisions or distinctions among pilgrims journeying to Sri Pāda. In other words, disregarding the devotional content, what is explicitly present in this communicative language of the pilgrims is that it still marks them as belonging to 'societies' rather than 'communitas' which is quite a contrary situation to the Turnerian approach. Quite similar to the formation of 'traditional' *nade* or pilgrim's group, which I have previously discussed, using the every day language of kinship in the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda seems to be reinforcing rather surpassing the hierarchical positions of the everyday world albeit in rather a different form or an entirely different situation. In other words, the social divisions and identities highlighted by Turner would not be left behind by the pilgrims in visiting Sri Pāda, but rather they are still very clearly present among them.

Though the pilgrims still use the language of kinship in their devotional vocabulary, as I mentioned before, the content and the way in which those poems and the friendly greeting are being expressed among/between pilgrims groups particularly in the young pilgrims groups have been quite dramatically changed. Surprisingly, the devotional aspects of those poems and the "polite" ways of expressing friendly

²⁴⁹ Similar kinship terminology in the every day conversation has begun to change; instead of calling a person through "traditional kinship terminology" most of the people who belong to present generation would call each other "*ōya*" (similar to personal pronoun 'you') or "*mēya*" (he/she).

greetings have been contested and are fading from their central visibility with the advent of new style of *tunsarana* that have quite certainly been brought into Sri Pāda by the youth pilgrims. Today we can quite frequently hear this differently made, remade or reconstituted *tunsarana*, rather than the one that we heard yesterday. In general, new form of *tunsarana* are altered or remade and popularly sung by certain youth pilgrim's groups. Such 'devotional poems' are usually not sung but shouted out with much laughter and create more fun than sanctity. Let me illustrate this change with a few examples. This is an interesting poem I recorded from a group of youth pilgrims:

Apē 'bosa' [our boss; the Buddha] - Api vadinna- to worship by us

Saman deviyo- phihita vanna – May god Saman helps

In this devotional poem, the Buddha is being called not 'our Buddha' but 'our Boss'. This by any means, might be the recently innovated secular name for the Buddha. The following example further shows how 'old devotional poems' have given way to a currently emerging "new style of songs" which is far from devoutness in their orientation.

Nai nai nai –Budu sarani

Vai vai vai – karūnavai

Tai tai tai – devi phihitai

Aluth jōdu vandavanna- to worship newly [married] couples

Parana jōdu vandavanna-to worship [old] married couples

Pānalagiya jōdu vandavanna-to worship couples who have eloped

Nāki jōdu vandavanna-to worship old couples

Similarly, the tone and the content of the friendly greetings have also changed in comparison to the 'old form' of greetings, which were expressively exchanged among pilgrims in the way of religious manner. The following example shows how the religious content of those friendly greetings have been modified for more 'entertainment' value rather than 'devotional' purposes:

Vāndala bahina me nangita (To the sister who has worshipped and is descending

Ape sīya 'sure' tamai would surely match (married) to my grandfather)

ēhema kiuva ē ayyata (The brother who said so would definitely suitable for my
Apē achchi ‘sure’ *tamai* grandmother)

Vāndala bahina mē nadeta (This pilgrim group who have worshipped and is
Apith ēkka ‘set’ *ventai* descending, would invite to join with us for fun)

Though this new style of exchange of friendly greetings do not contain devotional or religious flavour as far as the youth pilgrims are concerned they no doubt provide some sort of ‘fun’ for them. For such enjoyment, certain youth pilgrims have modified or remade the content and rhythmic nature of the ‘old’ versions of devotional poems much more relevant to modern pop songs. Using a few English words such as ‘boss’, ‘sure’, and ‘set’ along with these new forms of poems and friendly greetings further shows the direction of change in the ‘old’ style of ‘devotionalism’.

6.11 Pain and Gain of the Journey

The final characteristic of the journeying to Sri Pāda is that involving discomforts and difficulties; the endurance of these is considered by many to be a meritorious act but young pilgrims don’t see it this way. For them to complete this arduous journey is a challenge. There is gratitude and contentment if the difficulties, pain for example, cease to be a problem and there is the relief and joy of arrival. There is a sense of attainment, of having participated and completed one of the most difficult religious journeys on the land of Sri Lanka. The physical pain of the journey is not recognised as what Daniel (1984) has described ‘divine love’ but as particular way of gaining merit and the achievement of mundane goals. But I have observed some unforgettable miserable situations (low temperature and breeze windy weather create miserable situation for the pilgrims who never experienced them) that pilgrims faced during the journey as well as at the temple hence such ‘painful’ aspect of the pilgrimage needs to be discussed separately as Dubisch, Jill (1995) explains about Greek pilgrims that I am unable to do it here.

Before ending my description of journey to Sri Pāda, one thing must be stressed here, given the scope of my study the return journey remains unexplored here. However,

recent anthropological studies have stressed the importance of the return in pilgrimage. For example, Gold (1988) marks the end of the journey as home, the place where pilgrims almost always return and begin again the daily rhythm of living. Most often, in the Buddhist context, there is hard to find rites of return or reincorporation. The return seems to be regarded as unimportant, uninteresting, or simply unnoticed.

6.12 Conclusion

So far I have tried to highlight some visible features of the journeying aspect of Sri Pāda pilgrims, which could hardly be found among pilgrims who go on other national pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka. At the beginning of this chapter I tried to give an idea of the general features of Sri Pāda pilgrimage, as found at other national pilgrimage sites in the country. Among them I discussed the scale and popularity of the pilgrimage that is much higher than any national pilgrimage sites in the country, the effect of modern transportation for such popularity, the increases of pilgrims and also the general atmosphere at Sri Pāda, particularly the festivity and trade one finds at any of the religious festivals of Sri Lanka.

Then I moved on to describe more specific characteristics of the journey to Sri Pāda, which are hard to find among pilgrims journeying to any other major religious sites in the country. I discussed more specifically the nature of pilgrim's groups, particularly the role of *nadegura* and its remarkable changes where the conventional role of the *nadegura* have now been taken over by the newly emerging pilgrim's leaders specifically the female *nadeguras* and the youth group's leaders popularly known as 'manager'. Parallel to this I have also shown how the purpose of being conventional *nadeguras* has itself changed from 'merit making' to 'money making'. I have also discussed the different forms of rituals practices and activities that the pilgrims undergo before and during their journey to Sri Pāda. The rituals performed at certain religiously important places, particularly during the climbing or at rest, for example the ritual at the needle rock (*Idikatupāna*) and at the *Sētagangula*, are remarkable features of the overall religiosity that can be found at Sri Pāda. Additionally, there are the devotional poems and friendly greeting, which can be

seen as the most intrinsic and visible part of the journey, during which pilgrims generally sing to ask for the help and protection of the guardian deity of Sri Pāda. However, I have highlighted that the devotional aspect of these poems and the friendly greetings have changed from their 'original' goals and orientations and have indeed been remade or reconstituted with different flavour, different taste or different tempo by the fun seekers. Similarly, I have shown that these devotional poems now being used or rather misused by the certain motivated groups for commercial purposes. I have presented only few of many changing visages in this chapter and there are many more to discuss. However, given the nature of my present work I leave many of these themes undeveloped. My interest here is to give an idea of what kind of Buddhist pilgrimage site that Sri Pāda is, which in turn reflects the kind of Buddhist identity expressed there through the different forms of Buddhist practices found in the journey as well as at Sri Pāda temple.

Apart from the general description of the Buddhists journeying to Sri Pāda, I have compared some of the materials present on their journey with the existing limited literature of a similar kind in the anthropology of pilgrimage of South Asia in order to show unique features that are inherent to the pilgrims journeying to Sri Pāda and the limitation of main theoretical approaches of Anthropology of pilgrimage in understanding them. I particularly made a comparison with work of Valentine Daniel whose description and analysis is mainly based on a group of village pilgrims journeying to one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in South India. This is partly because of unavailability of such an ethnographical description on the journeying aspect of the pilgrimage in the Anthropology of Sri Lanka. As I mentioned before, most of the works on major pilgrimage sites in the island are concentrated on describing and analysing those sacred centres and surprisingly the journeying aspect of pilgrims visiting such sites are largely remain untouched.

Daniel's work, by and large, is in agreement with the Turnerian approach or notion of *communitas*, which describes the individual pilgrim's temporary transition away from mundane structures and social interdependence into a looser commonality of feeling with fellow pilgrims. Daniel shows that the pilgrims journeying to Sabari

Malai gradually develop a sense of *communitas* or more precisely the 'Firstness' through the 'Secondness' even before they undertake the journey. For Daniel pilgrimage itself is an exercise in the progressive and processual acquisition of knowledge and the corresponding shedding of ignorance. In other words it is a journey which moving through 'Thirdness' and 'Secondness' to the 'Firstness'. Daniel explains that the Hindu pilgrim is less optimistic about Thirdness, which emphasises rules, laws, theories, categories, and distinctions that alienates the pilgrim from a true synthetic knowledge of the oneness. Therefore, he must strive to move away from the world of theories and laws, through Secondness, which dissolves the rules and theories that classify "the other" which looms out against the self. Firstness, is beyond all self and other distinctions (1984: 244). In Firstness, the pilgrim leaves behind his temporal, differentiated identity and exists only as the *atman* and undifferentiated form of substance. In this sense everybody become 'Ayyappan pilgrims', and no social distinction, hierarchy or authority prevails. Quite contrary to this thesis, I have shown that Buddhist pilgrims journeying to Sri Pāda maintain their differences and divisions albeit in rather different forms from mundane structures. The differences that are found among Sri Pāda pilgrims are not necessarily a repetition of the divisions and ranks that are found in their everyday world such as caste and class and in this regard, the formation and operation of *nade* or pilgrim's groups is an extremely interesting phenomenon. As I have explained *nade* does not reproduce similar social differences of rank and status that can be found in the everyday world instead it produces a new form of 'structure', which operates beyond mundane structures and social interdependence of its participants yet remains opposite to Turnerian notion of 'communitas'. Within a *nade*, unlike 'Ayyappan pilgrims' all pilgrims do not enjoy equal status; everyone is not addressed or treated in equal manner (this explanation is not relevant to the newly emerged youth pilgrim's groups and in my view, youth groups are clearly corroborated with the Turnerian notion of 'communitas'). Instead, as I have shown, there are differences of rank and status notably present in the formation and the operation of *nade*. *Nadegura* or pilgrim's leader has the unquestionable authority over fellow pilgrims and the fellow pilgrims are further divided regardless of their gender differences as 'experienced' or veteran pilgrims (*purudukāra*) and as experienced

pilgrims or new comers (*kodukāra*). New comers are further differentiated by their age. The external appearance as well as special rituals designed for the *kodukārayas* are further marked by the imposition of roles, ranks and statues of differences in a *nade*. Such differences are equally found in *nades* operating under the 'traditional' *nadegura* and the newly emerged 'female *nadegura*'. However, those differences are markedly unfound among the youth pilgrim's groups which operate in an egalitarian manner under the newly found figure of 'manager'.

Apart from this, the differences are further exacerbated in the use of every day kinship language (by calling pilgrims as brother, sister, mother, grand-mother etc.) through the pilgrims passing the friendly greetings to each other, and also the operation of different regional traditions and practices at Sri Pāda which could not support the idea of 'The Firstness' or more loosely 'Communitas' among Sri Pāda pilgrims. Hence, it is clear that the Turnerian theoretical formulation would not be adequate for our understanding of differences among Sri Pāda pilgrims. As Eade and Sallnow remind us pilgrimage cannot be understood as a universal or homogeneous phenomenon but should instead be deconstructed into historically and culturally specific instances (1991: 03). Despite its inadequacy, as I shall explain in chapter 08, the Turnerian notion of *communitas* could easily be used when analysing the newly emerging youth pilgrim's groups because these groups themselves have become a centrally visible phenomenon as opposed to the highly structured conventional form of *nade*. Such youth pilgrim's groups as I would argue do maintain some form of 'communitas' or egalitarian social interaction, which Turner discusses. Before concluding I want to make a theoretical suggestion here in that both the competing discourse perspective of Eade and Sallnow and Turner's conjectures would be useful for understanding pilgrimage in Sri Lanka. Hence, pilgrims journeying to Sri Pāda could not be adequately understood if we relied on one or the other of the theoretical formulations. Making a clear distinction between the journey, on the one hand, and conduct at the pilgrimage site on the other is critical. Mainly because the pilgrimages for whom the journey is fundamental display quite different features from those for whom it is not so essential and only the proceedings at the site are important. In this chapter, I paid equal attention to the journey as the most integral part of the whole

pilgrimage process; how you get to the destination is as significant as what you do when you are there. Any generalisation about pilgrimage, which does not take account of these sorts of basic distinction (journey and the site proceedings), whether endorsing a Turnerian or competing discourse point of view, should be regarded with scepticism.

In addition to this theoretical modification, I also try to show the central moral value, which lies behind Sri Pāda journey. This is largely manifest through the notion of '*karūṇava*' ("compassion" or "kindness") and the devotional language that is used by the pilgrims throughout the journey. I show that the pilgrims have identified the "compassion" as the intrinsic moral quality of the god Saman rather than the Buddha. That is why they constantly utter the word of *karūṇavayi* in the journey when they ask 'the protection' or 'help' or kindness from him. In expecting such kindness pilgrims utter his intrinsic quality *karūṇavayi* repeatedly and refrain from using inappropriate words against him. The self-restrained behaviour of them here is also important particularly the restraint of mouth slipping (*kata vāradima*). However, as I have explained such self-restrain behaviour of pilgrims who come to Sri Pāda is far less common now than it would have been. I also explain another remarkable feature of Sri Pāda, which is the singing of devotional poems that are hard to find at any other pilgrimage sites in the island. Those poems are composed in simple every day language, remarkably in much shorter form and yet oriented to Buddha and the guardian deity Saman. These poems suggest highly devotional attitudes towards the Buddha and the deity Saman who is propitiated along side the sacred footprint of the Buddha. All of these qualities inherent in Sri Pāda pilgrimage suggest the kind of Buddhist pilgrimage site that Sri Pāda is, and what kind of Buddhist identity the pilgrims express before they reach the main Sri Pāda temple. Let me now turn to discuss what pilgrims do when they arrive at Sri Pāda temple.

Chapter 7: Worship and Votive Offerings: Pilgrims Religious Activities at the Temple

The mere fact of a mass gathering at a sacred site is unlikely to indicate any unanimity of meaning or motive among the participants; on the contrary, it is more likely to reveal severely discrepant or discordant understanding of the significance of the cult, even among those nominally sharing the same faith (Michael J. Sallnow 1991: 137).

7.1 Introduction

Let me begin this chapter by referring to what pilgrims practised when they arrived at the Sri Pāda Temple in the early nineteenth century and early twentieth century. These historical descriptions are mainly based on the gaze of two colonial officers whose views on local pilgrim practices at Sri Pāda temple were respectively reported in 1819 and 1927. Despite language differences, these descriptions are invaluable in throwing light upon the subject that I about to discuss.

[D]uring the north-east monsoon, when weather is commonly dry on the western part [side] of the island, the Peak is visited by a number of pilgrims, who come by the way of Saffragam [Sabaragamuva; Ratnapura]. On our arrival at the summit, there were about forty pilgrims engaged in their devotions before the sacred impression; and during the day a considerable number of [pilgrims] parties arrived, consisting of persons of all ages. Some of them were indeed mere children; and others, both men and women, were bent and infirm from old age. They were all dressed in their best clothes. When a party of pilgrims arrived, they generally proceeded to the rock [of the sacred footprint]. They stood for a short time looking at the sacred impression, making a number of profound SALAAMS [worship], putting the palms of the hands together, and holding them before their faces, bending low at the same time, or raising them above the head. At the same time they seemed to be muttering some words of devotion. Each individual presented an offering, which was placed on the sacred impression. The offerings consisted generally of copper coin, rice, betel leaves, areca-nuts, cotton cloth, onions, flowers, a lock of the hair of the head, or a portion of a long beard. The offerings are removed soon after they are deposited on the holy footstep.

The pilgrims then descended the rock [to the lower terrace] and formed themselves into a row, with their faces towards the footprint or SREE Pada. Here one of the party opened a small prayer-book (*bana potta*), constructed of talipot leaves [ola-leaf] and chanted a number of sentences or passage from it. At the end of each passage he was joined by the whole group in a loud chorus. We did not observe the priests assist the pilgrims in their devotions, although we were informed that they sometimes do so. With the ceremonies at the sacred impression having been completed, each of the pilgrims rang one of the bells by pulling a string attached to the clapper. They then produced some strips of cloth, which had been previously dipped in oil; these having been lit [lighting lamps], were placed upon a flat iron shelf by some of the pilgrims, erected for the purpose, and other upon a fragment of a rock. The pilgrims commonly finished their devotions in about twelve or fifteen minutes, after [...] to descent the mountain...(Henry Marshall: 'Ceylon' 1819 (1954): 179-181).

The second view:

[W]hen the first glamour of arrival has abated, the pilgrim band [*nade*] collects around its leader, who distributes the individual offerings, which each is to give; then, with deep obeisance, all climb the few steps that lead to the Footprint. Gazing at last upon the goal of their long pilgrimage, they kneel in prayer, before pressing forward to place upon its rocky surface the offerings, of cloths, money and silver ornaments, which they have carried so far. Standing at the rails that guard the sacred object from harm, they burn oil that has been brought solidified inside coconut shells, and lay areca flowers before the holy emblem [footprint]; then, descending from the rock, they kneel again in the little compound [*maluwa*], reciting texts and prayers..(R.H. Bassett: 'Romantic Ceylon' 1929: 206).

These accounts give an idea of what pilgrims did when they arrived at the Sri Pāda temple in the colonial past. But, unsurprisingly they have not produced knowledge or are incapable of producing such knowledge as to why pilgrims did what they did. My attempt in this chapter is not merely to provide an ethnographic account of pilgrims' activities at the temple, but also to explore the complex of meanings or motives

underlying these activities. As Sallnow reminds us in the quotation at the beginning of this chapter, a mass gathering at a sacred site cannot be understood through any unanimity of meaning but rather the significance of attending such places should be understood by the more 'discrepant' or 'discordant' meanings attached to them.

As Obeyesekere (1977, 1978, 1981) has pointed out, the motives behind pilgrimages to Kataragama, particularly to the shrine of God Kataragama, who he characterises as 'willing to do anything to help his devoted adherent' (1977: 389), are two fold. On the one hand, the majority of pilgrims go there for the making and fulfilling of vows through making various kinds of offerings to the god in order to 'achieve new goals' (ibid.) in the competitive world of scarce resources. On the other hand, groups of pilgrims who are involved in more externalised forms of worship, practice *bhakti* devotionism with vigorous dancing and sometimes displays of ecstatic emotionalism in order to acquire the power bestowed by the god's grace. Obeyesekere tends to focus on the latter groups, particularly those who walk the fire (1978), or who became priests or priestesses with hair in matted locks (1981), or those who hang on hooks or roll in the hot sand, and otherwise engage in extreme forms of devotional behaviour.

Anuradhapura, as Nissan (1985, 1988) shows is quite different from Kataragama. Pilgrims go to Anuradhapura to worship and make merit. An attitude of internalised devotion is appropriate for such merit making: of restraint and calm in physical and emotional manner (1988: 254) and some times pilgrims do make and fulfil vows at the Temple of the Bo Tree on human issues of fertility, such as pregnancy and childbirth, health and harvest (1985: 90-94). But many people visit Anuradhapura to take the eight precepts (*sil*) and worship the Buddha, which also includes participation in mass meditation campaigns, or listening to *pirit* chanting and give *dansalas* (alms-halls) or free food and drink to pilgrims (1988:260).

Pilgrims come to the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy to see the great annual pageant of the former Kandyan kingdom, which lasts for a fortnight with processions each night (Seneviratne 1978). Although many people make offerings at the temple during

this time, the crowds assemble primarily as on lookers; merit can be acquired from witnessing a parade (cf: Nissan 1988: 254).

Jock Stirrat who writes about Sinhala Catholics (1992) and their pilgrimage (1982) to shrines that are associated with churches and saints, has pointed out that many pilgrims come to those shrines particularly Madhu and Talawila 'to gain help (*pihita*) or blessings (*asirvādaya*) concerned with such mundane matters as health, jobs, economic problems or family troubles' but fewer come with a particular devotion to the saint (1982: 390). However, he also shows the shift of pilgrims' interest from the older, place specific shrines to the new person-centred cults where the charismatic cult leaders, actively invoke particular saints to salve the misfortunes (e.g. 'demonic attack') of their devotees (1991, 1992). Personal distress is explained increasingly in terms of a belief in sorcery, which the Buddhists also share. The new generation of Catholic shrines offers yet another perspective on bodily healing in the context of pilgrimage.

Rohan Bastin (2002) shows this in his recent study at Munnesvaram temple near Chilaw, about forty miles north of Colombo. The Siva temple is highly venerated by the Hindus of Sri Lanka, but Sinhala Buddhists are more drawn to the temple of goddess Bhadrakali or Kali located outside the main temple (Obeyesekere 1975; Bastin 1996). This temple is believed by Sinhala Buddhists to be her original temple and understood to command a tremendous religious potency and this, according to Bastin, attracts large crowds of devotees to Munnesvaram. Most of the pilgrims visit her temple to ask for intervention into their personal crisis, which range from simply providing protection to her devotee to acts of striking revenge on behalf of a devotee. The latter action is entirely based on sorcery where devotees at the temple practice a number of revenge rites and counter sorcery rites (2002: 59-87).

In general, pilgrims visit pilgrimage sites like Anuradhapura (Nissan: 1985), Kelaniya (Walters: 1996) and Kandy (Senaviratne: 1976) where Buddhist idioms are more emphasised, with the intention of the accumulation of merit that can be applied in this or future lives, what Morinis labels as "devotional pilgrimages" (1992:10-11).

Whereas pilgrims who go to other pilgrimage sites seem to be more focused on achieving worldly goals or in hope of obtaining help for their personal crises, for Morinis such pilgrimages are “instrumental” (ibid.). The pilgrimage sites like Kataragama (Obeyesekere 1977) and Munnesvaram (Bastin 2002) would be the perfect example of “instrumental pilgrimage”.

As I will explain in this chapter both instrumental and devotional aspects are equally stressed among pilgrims to the contemporary Sri Pāda temple. Today, as in the past, though pilgrims go to Sri Pāda with a purpose of worshipping (*vaḍḍinna*) the sacred footprint in order to acquire merit (*pin*), many pilgrims come to Sri Pāda to gain help (*pihita*) from the ‘sacred footprint’ and the guardian deity Saman in regard to ‘this-worldly’ benefits rather than ‘other-worldly’. Interestingly, also a sizeable proportion of those who come to Sri Pāda are not all that interested in religion. Admittedly they may worship the sacred footprint, and deity Saman, but on their own admission they are there for pleasure (*vinode*) rather than because of any great devotion to the sacred footprint or the deity Saman. So, today journey to Sri Pāda is much more than a religious journey undertaken in part for the acquisition of merit in the past.

As it was in the past, even today somewhat similar ritual patterns can be identified among the pilgrims’ practices at the Sri Pāda temple. Different, visibly innovative and, collective or congregational religious practices (e.g., chanting *pirit*, preaching *bana*, arms giving, *budu pūjās* but all collectively known as *pinkama*) have emerged in the post-colonial Sri Pāda pilgrimage. I have already discussed the collective or congregational forms of Buddhist practices at the Sri Pāda temple that are mainly oriented to merit making for the other worldly benefits in some detail (see chapter 5) and my attention here turns to individual practices which are expressively entangled with day today human sufferings or ‘this worldly benefits’.

Buddhist pilgrims, as I explained in the last chapter, during their journey, involve both emotions and bodily practices oriented to Buddha and Saman, the guardian deity of the Sri Pāda temple. They customarily perform several rituals and sing devotional songs and exchange friendly greetings with fellow pilgrims before they

reach Sri Pāda temple. Once they arrive at the Temple they tend to perform certain rituals and worship in honour of the sacred footprint (Buddha) and its guardian deity Saman.

At a major centre of Buddhist worship, as Nissan (1986) explains in relation to Anuradhapura, it appears that the clear-cut dichotomy between ‘other-worldly’ and ‘this-worldly’ orientations in religious practice, corresponding with the distinction between the Buddha and the gods, becomes blurred. Thus, as in Anuradhapura, worship of the Buddha, provides possibilities for obtaining ‘worldly’ benefit at Sri Pāda as well²⁵⁰. At the end of this chapter I take up this issue in the analysis of Buddhist practice at Sri Pāda.

7.2 Non-congregational or Individual Practices at Sri Pāda Temple

Let me start with a brief description of the general pattern of individual religious practices at the temple which can be identified in the following sequences: as soon as pilgrims come to the Sri Pāda temple, they go directly to the footprint shrine (the physical structure of the temple is arranged in this direction) where they worship privately the sacred footprint with offerings of a material nature especially *panduru* (coin), white cloth, dry medicinal plants²⁵¹ and flowers together with physical gestures of respect. These are mostly kneeling in front of the sacred footprint and touching it three times with their foreheads and two palms. In addition to meritorious veneration, pilgrims might also make or fulfil vows and more interestingly make wishes (*prarthanāvas*) at the footprint shrine (these two acts will be discussed in

²⁵⁰ Kevin Trainor (1997) also demonstrates veneration of the Buddha relics as a technology of remembrance and representation, which makes present the Buddha of the past for living Buddhists. He shows that the ritual behaviour and symbolic significance oriented toward the Buddha’s relics serve to render the Buddha present for the purposes of merit-making [‘other-worldly’] and make a sense of his “felt presence” for the worshiper [to achieve this ‘worldly’ benefit]. The popularity of the latter in contemporary Sri Lanka has shown a shift of [Buddha’s] relics from the setting of the temple to the homes of the laity (1997:193-197). Hence, practice orientated to Buddha, or more precisely to his relics (e.g. footprint), can exploit the potential for worldly benefit other than the gods (e.g. Saman). In other word, ostensibly the power of the relics mediates the divide between other-worldly and this-worldly concerns.

²⁵¹ Though the pilgrims bring various dry medicinal plants to offer the footprint, the temple authorities have banned putting them onto the footprint, and instead have encouraged pilgrims to put them into a collection basket. Similarly, for protection, oil lamp offerings in the upper courtyard have been completely banned after laying terrazzo on the compound.

detail soon). Then they visit the shrine of the guardian deity, Saman, where most of the pilgrims offer coins (*panduru*) to thank him for bringing them safely to Sri Pāda. Also, some pilgrims make or fulfil vows on various family and personal matters, which I will explain when discussing the motives of the offerings at the deity shrine. Vows are often made or fulfilled with the assistance of the deity priest (*kapumahattaya*), although some are made or fulfilled without the use of such a personal intermediary. Once worship and offerings at the deity shrine have finished, pilgrims usually move to two other important places. One such place is where pilgrims usually toll a large bell (*ghantara*) to mark the number of times they have visited the temple. They then move on to visit the place where light offerings are made at the huge Twelve-month lamp (*dolos maha pahana*); here they usually offer coconut and various other medicinal oils for the burning lamp. Some pilgrims collect burning oil from the lamp, which they believe might have curative power for certain physical disorders. Most pilgrims seek ‘good health’ (*nirogi suva*) out of offering made at the Twelve-month lamp; they expect to achieve similar relief by offering dry medicinal plants (*beheth badu*) at the sacred footprint shrine.

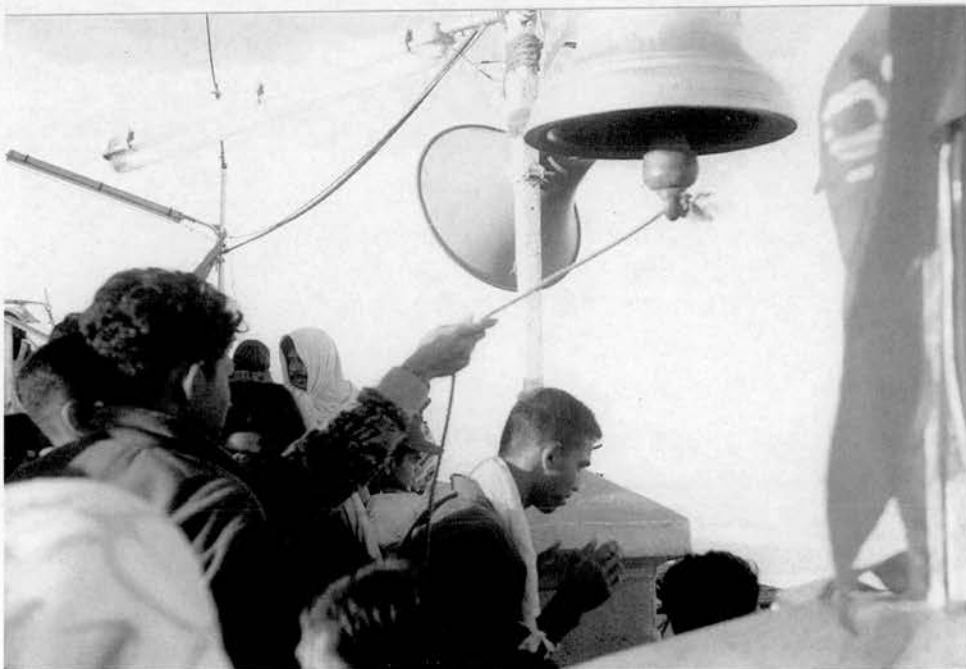


Plate 7.1- Bell Tolling



Plate 7.2 Offerings are made at the Twelve-month lamp (*dolos maha pahana*)

7.3 Cash donation at the Temple

The final individual act that many pilgrims commonly perform is offering cash donations to the Sri Pāda temple ‘development’ fund²⁵². The donation office uses a private address system, over which the pilgrims are reminded of the meritorious contributions they can make there. Those who make contributions receive tickets²⁵³ (*pin pattraya* lit. meritorious receipt). These meritorious donations are announced over loud speakers with a mention of the person who has given the money, the place he/she comes from, the amount given, and the name of the person on whose behalf the merit has been made. Other announcements, such as those concerning lost people, items and special announcements by the temple authorities, are also made at this office. Interestingly, merit transfer to the dead is very common in these public announcements at Sri Pāda, but significant numbers of donations are also made for good health, protection from malevolent planetary influence, seeking general protection²⁵⁴ of the deity Saman and economic well-being, etc. The transfer of merit

²⁵² I have discussed the origin of this fund in chapter 4.

²⁵³ At the donation office tickets are ‘selling’ for Rs.10 to 500.

²⁵⁴ One of the Clerks at the donation office told me that during the time of war they received significant cash donations from the relatives of the armed forces who were serving in the “North-east war zone” in order to secure “the protection of the God Saman” for their loved ones. Similarly, the

to the dead in such a way is no doubt a new phenomenon and carrying out this act at national pilgrimage sites, even the less popular sites in the country, is not uncommon today²⁵⁵.

I will now move onto discuss this new phenomena in relation to other technologies of merit transferring in Buddhist societies. Anthropological studies on Theravada Buddhist societies have shown that in contrast to the example above, there are manifold 'traditional' practices believed to affect the transfer of merit from one party to another (e.g., Gombrich 1971: 227-243, Obeyesekere 1968: 25-26; Spiro 1970: 124-128, Tambiah 1970, Keyes 1983: 261-286). The most common ritual act that entails the transfer of merit is one in which merit is shared with all sentient beings, deities and the dead. In Sinhala Buddhist society, transferring merit (*pin dima* 'giving merit') to dead relatives is a common practice, carried out at funerals. This is always officiated by Buddhist monks and later through providing food for the monks (*dane*) at fixed intervals of time²⁵⁶. This is due to a belief in personal survival after death, which as Gombrich notes, is a fundamental feature of Sinhala Buddhism in practice (1971: 243). Gombrich has suggested a reason why merit-transference is an essential element in the doctrine of kamma in popular Buddhism. He states, 'A sociologist might add that, although the Buddhist doctrine of karma is purely individualistic,

chief deity priest at the shrine of the God Saman told me when there is a major operation to take place in the Northeast war zone the number of clients who visited the shrine to seek God Saman's protection dramatically increased. However, I did not personally come across such examples during my fieldwork. This, I suspect is due to the relative peace in the country at the time of my field work, following the signing of ceasefire agreement between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE in February 2002. For a comprehensive analysis on social consequences of tragic civil war in Sri Lanka, see Winslow & Woost (2004).

²⁵⁵ The announcement made about this particular reason implicitly reflects the altered "pathology" of Sri Lankan society that has taken place over the last several decades. According to official estimates 60,000 people have already died in the arms conflict between the government forces and the separatist movement of Tamil tigers (LTTE), and another 30,000 have died or are missing in conflict between the government and forces aligned to the Sinhalese People's Front (JVP). In addition, homicide and suicide cases have increased at an alarming rate over the last two decades in Sri Lanka. I have noticed that many of the merit-transferring announcements at the temple are made explicitly under the name of the dead soldiers portraying them as heroes whereas some other merit transferring announcements are made implicitly under the special terminology "untimely death" (*akalaye miya giya*). I suspect that these cases cover death or missing people from during the JVP armed struggle in 1988-90 or people who committed suicide, homicide or died by other less publicly desirable means.

²⁵⁶ The number and size of such *dānes* depends mainly on the wealth and social status of the family; however, a *dane* on the seventh day after death is obligatory, and also one three months after death is almost equally common. Annual *dānes* on the anniversary of the death are very common, especially for dead parents (cf, Gombrich 1971: 229).

merit-transference can make merit appear as the common property of a social group, so that *patti* [proffering merit to others] is functional for kinship solidarity' (1971b: 219). Thus, while Buddhists have accepted the Buddhist doctrine of karma, they have also come to conceive of merit as having the character of a "spiritual currency", to use Gombrich's term (*ibid.*), which is a transferable commodity. Keyes shows that the importance of this commodity is stressed primarily when there is a rupture in the social order, that is, when a person dies, renounces ordinary social life in order to become a member of the Buddhist Sangha [monk] or when there is a crisis of political legitimacy (Keyes 1983: 283). The idea of merit-transference makes possible, according to Keyes, an accommodation because the Buddhist theory of kamma has this social imperative (*ibid.*). In contrast to Keyes, Gombrich's analysis based on rather emphasis on the spirit of the orthodox theory of karma rather than their social necessities.

As Ivan Strenski (1983:463-476) has pointed out, the motivation behind these notions of merit making and merit transferring cannot be understand as only a crass calculus of spiritual merits and demerits. For example, orthodox theory sees the meritorious giving of *dāna* to the monk as a normal part of pious Buddhist life which, it may or may not be understood, circulates wealth through the monk for the benefit of all. Strenski suggests that giving in the Buddhist context may be seen from several perspectives, some competing, but some complementary. Giving defines the very relationship between the monk and lay society: the monks are always receivers, the laity always givers yet giving occupies a special place in the formation of the social solidarity or Buddhist society, culture and civilization (*ibid.*). It is to hold out a model of a society moving in spiralling circles of generosity and sympathetic joy along route to Nibbana. Such religious giving, Strenski argues, ought to be considered a fundamental internal factor in propelling Theravada Buddhism along the path to a fully social religious status. Hence, the idea of merit-transference seems to be understood as an inevitable part of the process of reproduction of Buddhist society. Generations of Buddhists dead and alive are in this way linked in a cycle of sympathy for the spiritual progress of one another in a pattern of what Strenski identifies as "generalised exchange in Buddhism" (*ibid.*). One such exchange would

be the monk receiving gifts within the context of merit making, and offers for others the occasion to make merit by rejoicing in merit earned by pious Buddhists²⁵⁷.

At Sri Pāda, donation office has provided an opportunity for making, sharing as well as transferring, merit, particularly to dead relatives without the participation of the monk: what is important for them is transmission of their meritorious donation over the temple's public address system. Ironically, such a system was first introduced to the temple in early 1960's under Morontuduve Dhammānanda's reordering project since when the donation office has become one of the main means of the temple economy. However, making a donation (as far as pilgrims are concerned) is meaningless without transmitting it over the "air". On one particular day the collection at the donation office was reported to be extremely low, whereas the collections of both the footprint shrine and the shrine of the God Saman were reported as the highest of the pilgrimage season. That was the date of the main annual temple festival [full moon day of March (*mādin pōya*)]. On this day the PA system at the donation office was closed down in order to facilitate the nationwide live telecast of the festival programme over both the national T.V and the radio, but the donation office was kept open for the pilgrim's donation. Interestingly, the result was a low turn out. Office staff told me that pilgrims are reluctant to donate cash at the donation office if their donations are not transmitted over public address system of the temple. This is important because acquiring or transferring merit is not simply assumed as a pious act (doctrinally speaking: a good karma) but at the same time public acknowledgement or make visible such an act is far more important than simply donating cash to the temple. That is why most of the temples or main shrines in Sri Lanka tend to publicly display or proclaim, when a person makes such pious donation. At any rate, this element can be visibly found in the donation made at Sri Pāda temple.

²⁵⁷ Seneviratne shown that merit making rituals involving monks, such as food offering to monk (*dāna*), ceremonial and ritual like pirit and Bodhipuja, now have expanded to involve the successful achievement of specific mundane goals especially among socially mobile middle classes and anxious politicians, which include the cancellation of demerit acquired in actions like fraud and murder routinely committed in political and economic competition and in the act of governance (1999:186-87).

The last two religious activities take place at the lower courtyard (*pahala maluva*) of the temple while the early events are obviously taking place in the most sacred space of the temple, the upper courtyard (*uda maluva*). Though the majority of pilgrims visit Sri Pāda in groups (*nade*), they usually perform the above rituals individually rather than collectively. Nevertheless, as I explained in chapter 5, there are some pilgrims who organise or sponsor or simply take part in collective or congregational *pinkama* (merit making ceremony), which specially take place during the full moon days at the temple. But the majority of pilgrims who come to Sri Pāda would not engage in such collective merit making ceremonies; instead they largely engage in worshipping, or perhaps making votive offerings, individually at the temple.

7.4 The attention on Sunrise

Though most of the pilgrims depart from the temple as soon as they complete the above outline religious activities some remain over night (considerable foreign tourists and non-Buddhists visitors as well) to watch the magnificent moment of sun rising and also to watch the unusual (triangular) shadow made by the sacred mountain just after the Sun is risen. But watching the shadow is a less interesting for most locals though it is a 'memorable' event for European tourists who know before hand about the phenomenon through the widely available tourist guides on Sri Lanka. But watching the sun rise is seen to have religious meaning particularly for the older pilgrims; as the Sun rises most of them tend to shout "*Sadhu..Sadhu..Sā*" in worship and admiration. Some old pilgrims told me that they believe the 'sun god' (*hirü deviyo*) worships the Buddha's footprint 'every morning'. Hence, this act of the Sun is popularly known among pilgrims as '*ira sēve*' (lit. service of the Sun [to Buddha]). They also believe that all the people who climb to Sri Pāda cannot see the '*ira sēve*'. Because, it can be seen people who have good deeds (*pin karalā tiyena aya*).

7.5 Private Worship at the footprint shrine

Pilgrims come to the footprint shrine, in general, to make offerings either in veneration of the footprint or veneration of the Buddha, yet Sinhala Buddhists believe the sacred footprint represents Buddha, a supreme figure, and they treat him as a living presence, alive in images (*pilimaya*) and in relics (*dhatu*), and attribute to

him supernatural powers. Hence, they make offerings and worship him both collectively and individually²⁵⁸. Interestingly, many people who come to Sri Pāda temple or the footprint shrine makes their offerings individually. But, people who visit the temple for the first time, or *kodukāra* pilgrims always worshiped the sacred footprint with the assistance of a veteran pilgrim (e.g. *nadeguru*). Before they worship the footprint, it is usually covered by a piece of white cloth, which is brought by the pilgrims together with other offerings. It is with that white cloth pilgrims touch the sacred footprint with their forehead (*nalala*) thrice. For the kodu pilgrims, a similar act of worship is performed with the help of a veteran pilgrim; usually, a veteran pilgrim in a pilgrim group, holds the kodu by his/her neck to make sure that the forehead touches the white cloth covering the footprint. This worship is always accompanied by a recitation of a special Pali-verse²⁵⁹ [repeated three times] that is mentioning their worship is not only directed to the Buddha's footprint at Sri Pāda temple but also three other footprints of him placed at three different sites in the world;

Yam nammadaya nadiyapulinechatere

Yamsachchbaddhagirike sumanachalagge

Yamtatta yonakapure muninochapadam

Tampada lanchana maham sirasanamami

I bow my head and worship to the footprint of the Buddha,
which is imprinted in the sand of Narmada river bank [in
India], on the mountain of Sachchabaddha, on the mountain

²⁵⁸ Some pilgrims particularly *kodukārayass* make worship with the help of a veteran pilgrim (e.g. *nadegura*). Also, some pilgrims might circumambulate and engaging in act of worship in smaller groups.

²⁵⁹ Actually, two different verses are recited to worship the footprint but pilgrims popularly use one that I have reported below and that one always use with the following Pali verse in the official daily ritual:

“kalyanatoghaganato muniyattaganathva
dassesichakkavaralakkana padalanchanam
lankamahi varamadu makutopamanam
vandamaham sumanakuta siluchyantam”

where the god Sumana lives and in the city of Yonaka [Mecca]²⁶⁰

After the completion of the *kodu* worship, the experienced or *purudukāra* pilgrims usually get their turn to worship the footprint. Before the worship of footprint, as I have noticed, some pilgrims circumambulate the footprint shrine thrice by placing *kodu* worshippers in the front of the procession, but many people make their offerings individually and worshipping privately. They largely offer 'panduru' (coin as well as notes right onto the sacred footprint) compare to other offerings such as cloths, flowers and medicinal plants, from which temple receive the largest income annually. Commonly, each and every pilgrim offers 'money' into the sacred footprint for the purpose of gaining 'merit' (*pin*). Offerings made in the footprint shrine, even if made privately in this way, are also included the highly meritorious offerings, namely *atapirikara* and *siuru* (robes) either to Buddha or footprint. Similarly some pilgrims might have chance to make merit by participating in the formal congregational *pūjās* that I have explained in chapter 5, are performed three times daily by a monk of the temple which are referred as the daily 'services' or *tevava*. Participation in these *pūjās* and offerings need not be just for the merit that brings rewards in future lives, may also be hoped to bring the benefits of general blessing for this life.

Pilgrims come to the footprint shrine not simply to make offerings or worship it but also they specifically ask for help (*pihita*) by making vows and wishes (*prarthanāva*) regarding mundane matters that they face. They not only bring their own problems, but also the grievances of their relatives and friends who could not come with them. Unlike at the deity shrine people make or fulfil vows at the footprint shrine by

²⁶⁰ My translation: interestingly the old Buddhist chronicles only mention Kelaniya and Sri Pāda, hence I am sure other name particularly Mecca is a later invention, prompted by the Muslim presence in Sri Lanka. According to a popular myth, it was believed that the Buddha himself planted his right footprint in the sands of Mecca and the left footprint on Sri Pāda. This claim in Obeyesekere's view emerged as a way of legitimising superiority of the Buddha over the Muslim God and saints 'when Muslims worshiped they were in fact also paying homage to the Buddha, recognizing his superiority, for his footprint and relics were enshrined in Mecca' (1984: 307-308). For Obeyesekere, from the Sinhala viewpoint the Muslim could be tolerated only if their God and their system of worship were subsidiary to the Buddha and Buddhism (ibid). This totalising view of Obeyesekere need to be cross-examined with the Muslims viewpoint then we would see different picture of such claim.

themselves. Similarly, they make wishes only at the footprint shrine because they believe that the footprint shrine has the 'power' to bring those wishes true. If the wish is come true they make promises to offer various things to the footprint. Unlike the vow making, people don't make wishes by wrapping up a coin in a small piece of white cloth²⁶¹. They make wishes (*prarthanāva*) just in their mind, not by any overt act, about the sort of help they seek for; for example they may wish "to get a job or find a marriage partner or have a baby". Usually a wish, unlike a vow, need not be fulfilled. It is always made in combination with the worshipping or offering *panduru* (coin) at the footprint shrine. Interestingly, as I will explain through my survey data in the next section, people mostly make more wishes than vows at the footprint shrine.

7.6 Votive offerings at the shrine of god Saman

The second most important part of the temple, which pilgrims visit is the shrine of the god Saman. He is always worshipped along with the other guardian deities of Sri Lanka. God Saman is one of the most benevolent deities in the Sinhala Buddhist divine hierarchy, after the god Natha who is often identified with the next Buddha, Maitreya (see Holt 1991). The operation of these deities and other lesser supernatural beings in the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon has sufficiently discussed by several anthropologists (e.g., Obeyesekere 1962, Ames 1966, Gombrich 1971, Kapferer 1983, Winslow 1984, Scott 1993 and De Silva 2000). According to them, those figures operate through the moral logic of Buddhism particularly notions of karma, authority (*varam*) and merit. The order in the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon has its own cult and special mode of propitiation, although Obeyesekere has pointed out that the hierarchy is integrated by the supreme position held by the Buddha in the pantheon

²⁶¹ But as some members of the Temple staff told me that they found large number of piece of papers on which some pilgrims had written their grievances either direct to the sacred footprint or the deity Saman. I was given two such piece of paper but there is no specific name, hence I call them "grievance notes" to the divine power. These grievance notes were directed to both the footprint and the God Saman. The first was asking a baby from the footprint and the God Saman "*saman-sripada babak*" and the second one was much interesting let me to translate it "Oh Lord Buddha! Oh God Saman I came to worship the Gutama Buddha's left footprint but I am so disappointed because my elder daughter, M.A.D. Chandravati has been facing lot of trouble in the middle-eastern country of Lebanon. Hence, please be brought her to land of Sri Lanka-This is her mother "

and the dogma that all supernatural beings participate in the human world by the Buddha's permission or *varama* (1962, 1982, 1984).

According to Obeyesekere the power that is exercised by the gods is generated through their spiritual virtues - a combination of power with benevolence known as *anubhava*, "spiritual influence" and their physical attributes (1984: 62). All major gods, including god Saman have these qualities, although they are not evenly distributed. For example; Vishnu, Saman, and Natha are more benevolent than punitive, thus closer to the Buddha and they share some of his characteristics. Kataragama, however, is considered the most powerful and is more involved in matters concerning the human world.

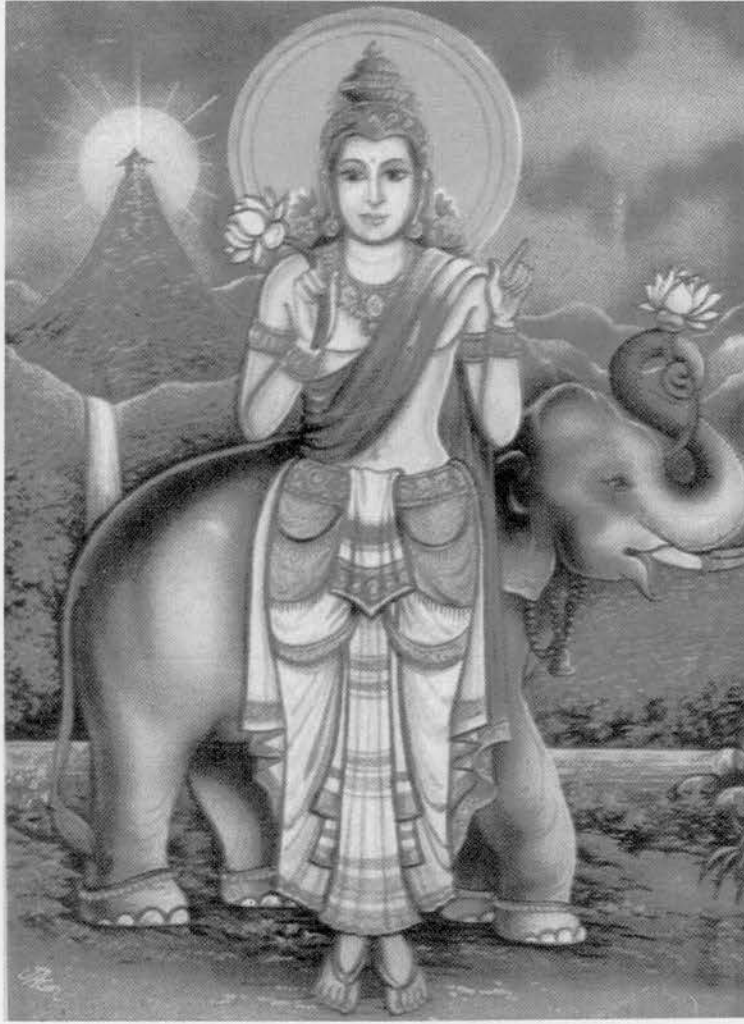
In Obeyesekere's analysis, the most benevolent gods like Natha, Vishnu and Saman have identified as dysfunctional (1984:65) and they have been replaced by the Gods like Kataragama (see 1977, 1978,1982), Suniyam (1988: 112-132) and Goddess Kali (1988: 133-162) who through their involvement in helping people have become the most popular figures in the current Sinhala Buddhist pantheon. Obeyesekere is right to the extent that in postcolonial Sri Lanka deities like Kataragama, Suniyam and Kali have become more attractive to Sinhala Buddhist devotees and thus have been elevated from their original position in the pantheon. The rise of popularity of these deities, Obeyesekere argues, is a response to changes in economic and political circumstances, and the resultant frustration and anxiety which sections of the population experience. The wide appropriation of these deities, particularly the god Kataragama, Obeyesekere sees, as the 'adoption of traditional pathways to achieve new goals' (1977: 389). However, his claim on the decline of a benevolent god like Saman from his world-involved nature does not correlate with his popularity at Sri Pāda in particular, and the province of Sabaragamuva in general. Saman might be not as popular as Kataragama, Suniyam and Kali, yet, according to my observation at his main shrines such as Sri Pāda and Ratnapura, people still ask for his help (*pihita*) and believe that his compassion (*karūṇava*) will end their day today personal crises. Before discussing Saman's intervention on personal crisis of his devotees, let me highlight some of his physical and spiritual attributes in detail.

Generally, God Saman is represented as white, that is 'pure', and his head is covered with a jewelled crown, he is mounted on a white elephant and carries a white lotus in his right hand. Unlike the other major gods, Saman does not carry a weapon. However, in one of two images at the shrine at Sri Pāda temple, god Saman is represented in white, with no crown, weapon or elephant but his right arm remains posture of forgiveness or *abhayamudra*. This image is believed to be the 'oldest' Saman image popularly known as "*handun deva rupaya*"²⁶² (lit. the god image that is made out of sandalwood). The second image, popularly known as "*ridi deva rūpaya*" (lit. the god image that was made out of silver), was originally placed in the shrine in 1940 and Saman is pictured with a crown, an elephant vehicle and a bow and arrow instead of a white lotus. Surprisingly, the sandalwood image of the god Saman is not identical with the silver image like most of the images of god Saman found in either mural or image form in the 'old' Buddhist temples in the Sabaragamuva area. Carrying a bow and arrow, wearing a jewelled crown and riding the white elephant vehicle are the most common features of the 'old form' of god Saman. The most remarkable of these features is the weapon (arrow) in Saman's left hand. Even at the Ratnapura main shrine of god Saman, the object of worship, which is paraded in the annual procession, is an arrow and not an image of the god. Interestingly, this 'warrior' character of the god Saman has completely disappeared in the modern form of iconographical and mythical representations of him. Hence, I suspect the 'ascetic' iconographical representation of god Saman might be a recent innovation in which his Buddhist character has been prominently remade. Today, there is no weapon in his [left] hand, instead he holds a white lotus and his right hand shows the posture of *abhayamudra*, the symbol of forgiveness. These Buddhistic benevolent forms of the god Saman can be widely seen in the shrines that have been dedicated to him at the newly emerged 'temples' in Sri Pāda area and in the other Buddhist temples on the island. Furthermore new pictorial images of the god Saman are now widely available for sale at the shops of the pilgrimage bazaars.

²⁶² Remarking on the image, Paranavitana states "it is not impossible that this is the identical image fashioned by Devapatiraja in the thirteenth century (1958:48). But the priest of deity Saman at the Palabaddala temple told me this image is not older than hundred years, and it was offered to Sri Pāda by the person called "Moses guru".



Picture 7.3- Sandalwood and Silver images of God Saman



Picture 7.4- Modern iconography of god Saman

I now move on from his iconographical representation to the main places at which Saman is worshipped. Other than the shrine at Sri Pāda temple, the main shrine is situated in the provincial capital of Ratnapura of the Sabaragamuwa Province, which is popularly known as *maha saman devāle*. There are also a number of other shrines dedicated to his name, among which Mahiyangana, Deraniyagala and Boltumbe are the most popular shrines where, annually, in the month of August, colourful processions are held in his honour. The most spectacular celebration is always held at his main shrine, lasting for fifteen days. During this celebration his consort, *biso deviyo* (the queen) and son, *kumara deviyo* (the prince) are paraded, together with the goddess Pattini, a form of worship that cannot be found at similar celebrations at

other popular shrines of god Saman. At the major shrine in Mahiyangana, Saman is propitiated along with his sister, who is popularly known in the region as “*maha loku akkā*” (lit. elder sister). Interestingly, she is not propitiated in any form at other popular shrines in the island, although Obeyesekere has found that the Vāddā people in Mahiyangana-Maho Oya area propitiated her as a mother goddess or Maha Lokuvo or Maha Kiriamma and also that the Vāddās claim the god Saman as their own ancestor (2002: 29). Similarly, Paranavitana (1958) has claimed that the god Saman, originally Yama, the god of the underworld, is a demonic being and suggests that he was not an obscure god of purely local significance, but came from North India and later became the Buddhist god known as Saman. Paranavitana’s view is hard to find in the popular mythological discourses that surround the god Saman.

However, Sinhala Buddhists generally view Saman as a pious disciple of the Buddha, who attained the first step (*sōvan*) in the path of nirvana after meeting Buddha at Mahiyangana during his first visit to the island. Hence, Saman is popular as the god of compassion (*kariūnava*), and the god of providing limitless help to humans. A devotee of the god Saman told me that he finds him the only ‘Buddhist’ god in Sri Lanka and for him, other gods are all Hindu²⁶³. Hence, Saman is not usually approached, for maleficent purposes or for vows of revenge; such intent is generally thought inappropriate for his benevolent characterisations. Though he is characterised as a benevolent and meritorious deity, he is however, expected to inflict punishment on those who dishonour or show disrespect to the temple, which has become territory under his jurisdiction (*adaviya*). Fear of the god’s anger should ensure a pious attitude amongst the pilgrims to Sri Pāda but as a *kapumahattaya* officiates at the *devāle* told me, the God Saman would not directly inflict harm on people even if they showed disrespectful conduct in his territory. However, he has

²⁶³ Similar opinions were expressed quite regularly by many of the people with whom I spoke during my fieldwork. In particular, the chief *kapumahattaya* of the main shrine in Ratnapura empathetically stated, “There is no Buddhist god other than god Saman. He met Buddha at Mahiyanganaya and became the first Buddhist ‘*upasaka*’ (pious lay Buddhist) in this country. Unlike other gods, he was born in this country and he is the most benevolent, compassionate and meritorious deity to whom, Buddhists can worship without hesitation”. Such assertions clearly indicate that the god Saman has come to be viewed as the “Sinhala Buddhist nationalist deity” in contemporary Sri Lanka.

given permission to deity Suniyam to punish such visitors to his territory²⁶⁴. Generally it is felt, that in the past, fear of the god's punishment was greater than it is now, that now the god is less revengeful and thus pilgrims are more relaxed in their attitudes throughout the journey to Sri Pāda as well as at the temple. Some have commented that the present-day fearlessness can be correlated with the general decline of religious commitment in the country.

However, pilgrims who visit Sri Pāda still seek the protection and help of the deity Saman. This is reflected in the activities that they carry out at his *devāle* in the temple. His shrine at Sri Pāda temple is only opened during the pilgrimage season and except for the time of 'official' offerings it remains open day and night for the devotees. During this period many people visit his shrine to seek his protection and help for many reasons. Most of the pilgrims seek his protection for a safe visit to the temple and in reaching the temple safely they express their gratitude by offering coins (*panduru*) and transferring merit that they gain through journeying to Sri Pāda. Some however, seek further blessing (*sēth shantiya*) and ask *kapumahattaya* to make plaint or *yātikava* (*kannalavva*) on their behalf. The process usually involves *Kapumahattaya* chanting a lengthy plaint and at the end of it placing a yellow dot of sandalwood paste (*tilaka*) on the foreheads of the clients for further blessing. For such *yātikava*, *kapumahattaya* is sometimes paid privately by his clients although the *tilaka* is quite frequently put on every client who happened to visit the shrine even without uttering *yātikava*.

The extracts below are a recording of the *yātikava*, or plaint chanted by the *kapumahattaya*:

O meritorious Sri Sumana Saman possessed of great spiritual powers and resides at the mount of Samanta [Sri Pāda] in this isle of Sri Lanka and ride on vehicle of white elephant (*elei ath*). O meritorious reverend sir you cast your divine eye onto the main shrine at Sabaragamuva [Ratnapura], Bena Samanala, Divaguha, Gettampana, Daraniyagala and this Sripadastanaya. O lord, people have come to your this divine place to offer you flowers, fruits,

²⁶⁴ Suniyam is a protective deity is by definition benevolent to his devotee, but malevolent toward his enemies (see: Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 96-132; Kapferer 1997).

cloths, incense and coins (*panduru*) and have respectfully worshipped you in order to tell their grievance (*duka*). O meritorious reverend sir! If they have done wrong [to you], please forgive them and kindly take the merit (pin) that they transfer you and protect them from bad influence of the nine planets (*nava graha dosa*), evil eye and evil mouth of human, sorcery (*hadi huniyam*), influence of inhuman (*yakksha, preta*) and banish all ninety eight diseases, ninety nine troubles and two hundred and three misfortunes. Also, O lord bless them to improve their jobs, business and children's education day by day and [I appeal you to] protect them on their way back to home. O lord, you may achieve nirvana!

Similar, *kannalavva* is also chanted by the *kapumahattaya*, when people make or fulfil their vows individually at the *devāle*, although there are slight differences in this process. The following table gives an idea of the reasons people make and fulfil vows at the Saman *devāle* in Sri Pāda temple.

Table 7.1 Reason for making and fulfilling vows at the deity shrine.

Reason	%
For Jobs/business	29
To succeed in education and examinations	27
For a safe return home (general blessing)	15
For help with childlessness	10#
To cure diseases	9
To Return to Sri Pāda	7
For issues of marriage /affairs	5#
Total	100

Source: Simple Survey 2002. [According to my discussion with the chief *kapumahattaya* at the *devāle*, the numbers given on issues of marriage and infertility should be higher].

The table 7.1 shows that the greatest proportion of vows made at the Saman *devāle* were for successful jobs [foreign & local] and businesses) and second to this was education and exams. A considerable number of vows were also made for successful human reproduction. Additionally, vows were made for curing diseases and resolving problems of marriages and love affairs. Several multi-purpose vows were also made and many people came to the *devāle* imply to obtain blessings from the god for a safe journey home. Below I provide accounts of a few of the cases of vows made or fulfilled at the Saman shrine.

Case 1. A twenty year old young woman came to Sri Pāda with her mother to fulfil the vow that she had made in the last year (2001) at this shrine. The vow had been for a successful interview to secure a post as a clerk at one of the locally owned private banks on the island. She had been successful in the interview and before assuming duty she wanted to thank god Saman for his help by offering him a fruit tray (*pūjā vatti*) at his shrine. At the same time her mother wanted to make another vow for her son who, in a few months time, was going to sit his final examination in civil engineering. The mother and daughter had come from Deraniyagala, an area where one of the main shrines of the god Saman is situated. They believed that the deity shrine of the god Saman at Sri Pāda was more powerful than other deity shrines because certain vows that they had made previously at Sri Pāda had also been successful.

Case 02. A young couple made a vow to seek help from the god Saman to bring back the mother of one of them who had not returned home since she left to work as a housemaid in the Middle East 22 years ago. They had come to Sri Pāda with a pilgrim group from the southern coastal town of Ambalamgoda.

Case 03. A Buddhist, women, in her mid-40's who had visited the Saman shrine in Sri Pāda temple with her husband and child had passed through the inauspicious astrological period of Saturn. They had brought a large picture

of the god Saman and offered this to him to release the vow they had made some years earlier to protect their son from the malevolent influence of Saturn.

Case 04. A thirty-five year old man, a three-wheeler driver from Kotahena in North of Colombo strongly believed²⁶⁵ that vows made to the deity Saman at Sri Pāda are always successful. He gave me several interesting examples of this to prove his faith which are reiterated below:

“My aunt (*nānda*) made a vow to the deity Saman to ask his help for building a house within a year. Surprisingly, she finished it even before a year-Also my brother had a tumour in the head. It was cured because we made a vow at Sri Pāda. Similarly, my sister’s son had a lung problem and doctors were predicted that he would be died within seven days. We went to Sri Pāda and made vow at Saman *devāle* and promised to fulfil it with two conches (*hak gedi*) and a gold chain. The lung problem was cured (*ēhemama nātiuna*).

Last year (2001) one of my friend made a vow for a job. This year he fulfilled the vow with offering a fruit tray to the deity Saman”

Case 05: Gunapala, a Sinhala Buddhist man in his forties was from the neighbouring town of Ratnapura. He owned several gem mines in that area and had come to Sri Pāda to give an offering of a basket (*pūjā vatti*) to the god Saman. He had previously asked the god Saman to help him find gems (*vasiyak*) in his mines and this wish had been fulfilled. His offering was made with the first piece of gem he had found in his gem mine. Gunapala strongly believed in the god Saman and said that there was a strong belief among those involved in the gem industry in his area that “after the installation of the deity statue at Sri Pāda temple the possibilities of finding gems would surely be increased”²⁶⁶.

²⁶⁵ The combination of making a vow as well as undertaking the arduous and often painful journey to Sri Pāda was, for him, the main reason that his vows had been successful Sri Pāda.

²⁶⁶ Another gem trader told me that this would happen after the lighting of the lamp at the deity shrine of Sri Pāda temple. This is situation where the outcome of a certain course of action is extremely uncertain. Gem miners frequently come to Sri Pāda otherwise they surely visit to the main shrine of

The statistical evidence demonstrating the variety of problems that have been brought by the devotees to the deity shrine at Sri Pāda is supported by these cases. Similar situations were also recorded at the footprint shrine. As previously stated, vows were not only made to the deity Saman at the *devāle* but also to the sacred footprint at the footprint shrine. The *kapumahattaya* maintained that all vows were made to the God Saman, the foremost God amongst all those who congregated at Sri Pāda temple. However, those who make vows frequently claim to make and fulfil vows to the sacred footprint itself. Indeed, at the temple, people can make vows at the special coin post²⁶⁷ (*panduru gaha*), which is placed between the footprint shrine and the *devāle*. Therefore it is only necessary to visit the footprint shrine or the *devāle* for the fulfilling of vows rather than the making of them²⁶⁸. Some people make offerings in the footprint shrine that might be thought more appropriate to be made to the *devāle*. I met a gem miner for example, who had come to the temple to fulfil a vow that he had made a year ago. He had released the vow himself by offering a few small gems to the sacred footprint. Similarly, a woman fulfilled a vow that she had made on behalf of her son, (who is a soldier serving in the war torn area of the country) with a small figure (*rupe*) made out of metal. This is a common way in which people attempt to fulfil their vows²⁶⁹ at the footprint shrine. Similar offerings are also made to the *devāle*, although it is clear that people do not offer fruit trays (*pūjā vatti*) to the footprint as they would offer to the god Saman when they fulfil the vows at the footprint.

god Saman in Ratnapura to make their vows in order to seek their fortunes in the extremely uncertain gem industry.

²⁶⁷ I was informed that this coin post was kept for menstruating women however; I noticed that both men and women made their vows at this place. The pollution (*killā*) associated with menstruation, childbirth and death is not clearly reflected now at Sri Pāda temple but it is generally argued that *killā* is dangerous when approaching the Gods, but is insignificant irrelevant to the Buddha.

²⁶⁸ People, generally believe that the best place to make new vows to the God Saman is at the *devāle* of Sri Pāda, rather than at the other devales that have been dedicated to him throughout the country.

²⁶⁹ Spencer reports that some people fulfil their vows to climb the mountain every year and in doing so, add a lamp to the flames of the larger lamp at the temple (1990:136).

I also noticed that some people, particularly traders or ‘business’ people, offer gold chains to the God Saman as a higher offering to him. These can be seen around the neck of the deity statue at the *devāle*. Interestingly, such an offering is hard to find at any other deity shrines of the God Saman. Even, chief *kapumahattaya* at the *devāle* could not say with certainty why people would offer gold chains in order to fulfil their vows²⁷⁰. A consideration of when offerings of this kind began is of less importance than deciphering whether those who come to the *devāle* are engaged in making or fulfilling a vow or simply making an offering for general blessings.

7.7 Fading “this” and “other” worldly syndrome

According to Elizabeth Nissan’s findings (1985) at the Bo tree temple in Anuradhapura the apparently clear-cut distinction between the Buddha and the Gods, or to put it another way, the other-worldly and the this worldly, is not maintained. This also applies at the footprint shrine. At the *devāle*, people bring their ‘this worldly matters’ to the footprint shrine where its benevolent power can be tapped through worship oriented towards the Buddha. This is in stark contrast to Obeyesekere’s (1963: 151; 1966: 22) view on Sinhala Buddhist worship in which, he states that other-worldly benefits are attained by Sinhala Buddhists through the worship of the Buddha. These worldly benefits, he claims, are attained by the propitiation of gods and other supernatural beings for as he and others note, asking favours directly of the Buddha is most uncommon if not altogether nonexistent. However, as I explain above, it is clear that the Buddha relics have been used for the attainment of both this-worldly and other-worldly benefits at Sri Pāda. Similar, ambiguous situations are also found at the temples of certain other major relics such as Anuradhapura (Nissan: 1985, 1988), the Temple of the Tooth (Seneviratne 1978) and also relics worship in general (Trainor 1997). It is frequently said, by both informants and anthropologists (e.g., Ames 1964, 1966; Obeyesekere 1963, 1966;

²⁷⁰ I was informed by an ex-official monk of Sri Pāda temple that this practice might have been introduced by the Colombo based Tamil traders, more precisely jewellery and gold traders, who came to Sri Pāda during the *Mahasiva ratri* ceremony. If this is the case, then it can be assumed that the Sinhala traders have copied this practice from them. I never met Tamil traders who have had come to make such offerings during the course of my fieldwork, however, this could perhaps be explained by the dramatic drop in the number of Tamils participating in Sri Pāda pilgrimage following the escalation of the ethnic war in the island. However, offering jewellery and other valuable items to Sri Pāda, as we have seen throughout the temple history, would not identify as a recent phenomenon.

Yalman 1962), that vows are not made to the Buddha but only to gods, and I would argue that generally this is true. Vows are not usually made or fulfilled before ordinary Buddha statues in ordinary temples. Instead vows are made to major relics of the Buddha, relics that are known through its history to be powerful, and as I explained in earlier chapters, are usually associated with kings. Such vows are most commonly of a caring nature. I frequently asked those who had made vows at Sri Pāda temple about vows they made elsewhere and their replies were quite ambiguous. Many had made vows either to the footprint or its guardian deity Saman.

Brief interviews were also carried out with nearly one thousand pilgrims and the results were striking. Just as many had not made vows either at the footprint shrine or the *devāle*, many claimed to have only made 'wishes' (*prarthanāva*)²⁷¹ which were seen as a kind of covert promise made at the footprint shrine rather than an overt act of vow-making. Additionally, a large number of *prarthanāva* made at the footprint shrine were based on this-worldly benefits rather than other-worldly²⁷² (see table 7.3). Similarly, many specifically said that they made vows and *prarthanāva* to the Bo Tree temple (*Srimaha bodhiya*) or the Temple of the Tooth (*daladāvahanse*) and other major pilgrimage sites of Buddha's relics (*dhatu*).

The veneration of relics is held to be equivalent to the veneration of the Buddha himself. The word *dhatu*, which is usually translated as relic, indicates an elemental substance. Relics are spoken of as living things; the honorific and the respectful elemental substance of the Buddha and also of monks and the kings²⁷³. Relics fall into three categories: bodily relics (*saririka dhatu*); things the Buddha used (*paribhōgika dhatu*) and images and representations of the Buddha, which serve as

²⁷¹ See Gombrich (1971:217-226) for etymology of the word.

²⁷² This is quite different from the village situation that has described by Gombrich (1971: 223). He states that 'the most typical and 'popular' *prarthanava* is the wish to be comfortably reborn till one finally attains nirvana under Maitri [next Buddha]'.

²⁷³ For example; the ability to emit the rays of the Buddha halo (*budu rās*) and the ability to move through space miraculously. However, such manifestations of power are rare and coincide with exceptional events.

reminders (*uddesika dhatu*) (Gombrich 1971:105). These categories are not clearly distinct although Sri Pāda is always identified as *paribhōgika dhatu*, things the Buddha used, or more precisely, a place where he visited. Sri Pāda has however also been visited by the three earlier Buddhas of this era; Kakusanda, Konagama and Kassapa and hence, Sri Pāda is marked as a holy place where the power of Buddha is present through his relics (the footprint). In Trainor's (1997) view the physical presence of the Buddha during his lifetime and through the enshrinement of his relics after his passing away speaks not of absence but of presence, a presence made fully tangible through monuments, Bodhi-trees, and images. It is these tangible representations that provide the orienting focus for a wide range of offerings and obeisance, activities that both reflect and construct a felt sense of the Buddha's authoritative presence in the circumstances of Buddhists' lives (1997:188).

Like other 'great places' where Buddha is represented through his relics, Sri Pāda is also associated with particular powers such as rainmaking or childbirth although it is largely credited with a more general, often undefined power. Unlike other places (for example; Anuradhapura, Kandy) pilgrims can directly tap the powers of the relic at Sri Pāda temple, this can be done not only through making vows, offerings and worshipping, but also simply by making '*prarthanāva*', that is, physically 'contacting' the sacred object.

In summary I argue that most of the people come to Sri Pāda today not merely to gain 'other worldly benefits' but mostly to gain 'this worldly benefits'. These they try to achieve not necessarily through the propitiation god [in this case god Saman] but largely through tapping "the power" of the Buddha or more precisely his relic. This view is supported by the following two tables. Here, the evidence suggests that the style of Buddhist religiosity found at Sri Pāda has blurred the distinction between 'transcendent' and 'pragmatic' or 'other-worldly' and 'this worldly' orientations.

Table 7.2 Main reasons for visiting Sri Pāda

	Frequency	Percent
To worship	313	42
Worship and pleasure	207	22
Curiosity to see the place	87	9
Annual visit	78	8
To fulfil or make a vow	60	7
To acquire merit	36	4
To see the surrounding and worship	25	3
To observe eight precepts	16	2
To get blessings from Saman	15	2
As a leader of pilgrimage group	14	2
Total	924	100

The table 7.2 shows the different reasons given by pilgrims for why they visited the Sri Pāda temple. Nearly 42 per cent said that they came to Sri Pāda to worship (*vadinna*) the sacred footprint whereas only 4 per cent said that they were there to acquire merit (*pin*). Many others did not prioritise worship. Interestingly, a large number, nearly 24 per cent of people, said that they were there for pleasure rather than worship. Similarly, out of the 924 people interviewed, nearly 10 per cent came simply out of faith or curiosity whilst another 3 per cent said that they came to enjoy the scenery rather than worship.

Most of these pleasure seekers are young men. Although they do go to the footprint shrine and worship it on their own declaration it is clear that they are there for pleasure rather than because of any great devotion to the sacred footprint or deity Saman. Large numbers of pilgrims however, do still visit Sri Pāda with religious purposes or specific reasons although most give more than one reason for their presence at Sri Pāda temple.

Table 7.3 The number of vows or wishes made

	Frequency	Per cent
No	229	25
Vow	147	16
Wish	548	59
Total	924	100

As the table 7.3 explains, 695 out of 924, which is around 75 per cent of pilgrims, either made vows (16 %) or wishes [*prartanāva*](59%) at Sri Pāda temple. Most of the *prartanāva* is made at the sacred footprint shrine of Buddha (59%), whereas vows are made largely at the deity shrine of Saman (14%). A small proportion of pilgrims (2%) had made their vows at both places. A greater number of individuals had made their wishes at the footprint shrine because of a strong belief that the possibility of success when a wish (*prarthanāva*) is made much higher than at the deity shrine. This is clearly indicated in the figures shown below (the table 7.4). Nearly 70 per cent of wishes made at the footprint were based upon “this worldly” affairs such as jobs/business (38%), Success in education and examinations (15%), marriage or affairs (10%) and health issues (8%). However, as mentioned earlier, there were also a considerable number of pilgrims who visited the deity shrine for similar reasons.

Table 7.4 Reasons for making wishes or *prarthanāva* at the footprint.

	Wish	Per cent
Jobs/business	209	38
Success in education and examinations	81	15
To be able to return	74	14
Marriage/affairs	57	10
To achieve ‘nirvana’	41	8
Childlessness	26	5
Merit transferring to dead relatives	26	5
A Safe journey home	20	4
Cure diseases	14	3
Total	548	100

The reasons shown in table 7.4 for making *prarthanāva* at the footprint shrine can be further explained through the following cases:

- A. Jayanthi, is a Sinhala Buddhist women in her mid 30's. She was born at Talawa near Anuradhapura in the North-Central Province and now lives at Katunayake [near the international airport] with her husband. In the late 1980's she became a factory worker in one of the garment factory in the Katunayake Industrial Zone where she met her husband who has been running a small teashop for the factory workers. After marriage she stopped working at the factory and began work to support her husband's business. When I met her at Sri Pāda she was on her fifth visit to the temple. She had never visited Sri Pāda before she had moved to Katunayake. She made her first visit to Sri Pāda with a group of fellow workers and her fiancé. In that visit on the advice of a female friend, she made a *prarthanāva* at the footprint concerning the receiving of a favourable answer from her cultivator father on her marriage to her fiancé. As she had promised, soon after their marriage she returned to Sri Pāda although this time she did not make any special *prarthanāva* at the footprint.

A few years after her marriage Jayanthi visited Sri Pāda again, this time making a *prarthanāva* on having a baby soon. In addition to the *prarthanāva* she also made a vow at the shrine of the god Saman on the same matter. During the same visit, Jayanthi's husband had also asked for the God Saman's favour on his business. Both of these wishes had been granted and subsequent visits were made. However, Jayanthi and her husband disagreed with each other on the reason for the results. Jayanthi's husband believed that things happened favourably with the help (*pihita*) of the God Saman, in opposition to Jayanthi who believes that her wish was made possible by the "power" (*balayen*) of the (Buddha) footprint.

Five years after her last visit Jayanthi wanted to visit Sri Pāda again the main reason being that her elder son was expecting to undergo a serious eye operation in the near future. Before the operation she wanted to make a *prarthanāva* that if her son's eye operation was successful, she would climb

Sri Pāda together with her son for the next five years. When Jayanthi introduced her husband to me, he said that he had made a separate vow on the same matter at the shrine of god Saman, where he firmly believed that the God Saman would help him as he done in the past.

- B. Sarath, a Sinhala Buddhist man in his mid-forties, is a bus conductor living in Moratuwa, South of Colombo, and had come to Sri Pāda with his family members and some friends. He has been visiting Sri Pāda since childhood and knows it to be a powerful place and the scene of many miracles (*hāskam*) and wonders. On this occasion Sarath was at Sri Pāda temple because he both wanted to be worshipped there for the first time by his two children and wanted to make a *prartanāva* for the successful completion of the construction of his house before end of the year. (He had so far managed to build the half of it). He told me that his friends were also here to make *prarthanāva* because on previous occasions the *prarthanāva* that they had made at the footprint (Sri Pāda) had succeeded. In a previous visit one of his friends had made a similar *prarthanāva* and in visiting now, wanted to release his promise by offering a metal cut out of a house²⁷⁴ to the footprint as representation of his new house. Sarath said, “Anything you would ask (just in mind) at the footprint it would definitely come true because unlike other places [pilgrimage sites] you make a *prarthanāva* at this place after making the most difficult journey, without coming here you can’t tap the spiritual power, “*anubhava*” of the Buddha’s footprint”.
- C. Channa is a twenty-two years old Sinhala Buddhist youth from near Kahawatta, about 40km south of Sri Pāda. He is a small-scale gem dealer who runs his own business at the town of Kahawatta, one of the famous centres of the gem trade in the province of Sabaragamuwa. I met Channa at Sri Pāda together with four friends of his who were all around Channa’s age. Among them three worked as gem miners in the same area and the other one was a vegetable seller from the neighbouring town, Palmadulla. They all agreed that they were at Sri Pāda for pleasure although they had briefly

²⁷⁴ The members of lay temple staff told me that they found many similar objects when they sorted out the daily collections at the footprint shrine at the shrine of the God Saman.

visited both the footprint shrine and the deity shrine of the god Saman for worshipping and to offer coins (*panduru*). At the footprint shrine, Channa and his friends had made *prarthanāvas* on the following causes: both the traders (gem & vegetable) said that they made *prarthanāva* on the improvement of their businesses (*viyapara vādi dyinu venna*) and the other one said he was hoping for a cure for his mother's illness.

In these cases, the pilgrims had come to Sri Pāda not simply for worship or to acquire merit, but also with a particular problem for which they had asked for favour from the footprint. This they had done through making *prarthanāva*, not as an overt act but quietly in their minds. Similar cases were recorded at the shrine of the God Saman but they were brought to attention of the deity through the practice of making and fulfilling vows. Personal requests are made to the footprint of the Buddha as well as to the God Saman while the supplicant ignores the usual 'official' temple practices. In all three cases, pilgrims are informed of the problem to the sacred footprint and similarly asked to assist it. In both cases A & B, the pilgrims had come to the temple to fulfil a promise made previously requesting the assistance of the sacred footprint of Buddha. This had been done by offering replicates of the form of the item (the metal ornaments), or simply making the journey to the temple. However, even without performing such reciprocal acts, the benefit of making *prarthanāva* at the footprint of Buddha would not have been lost. But this is not true for the deity. The offering basket or any other offerings are, in a sense, a tribute, a payment of a debt to the deity for the help the deity has rendered. In other word, as they do at the shrine of the God Saman people transfer merit or good karma to the God for the help he has rendered them. In contrast, by making *prarthanāva*, people don't transfer any merit to the Buddha or more precisely his relic, the footprint, because people know Buddha does not need merit for he is known to have achieved *nirvana*. Yet, as far as *prarthanāva* is concerned Sinhala Buddhist still seek, often indirectly his help in their worldly affairs.

My point is that it is the most common practice by Sinhala Buddhist who attend Sri Pāda temple. This is quite contrary to Obeyesekere and Gombrich's conclusion "for

modern devotees the figure of the Buddha is inadequate to their emotional needs” (1988: 455). If consider all the reasons for making vows or wishes (*prarthanāva*), the number of cases and the tabled figures give an impression that today’s pilgrims visit Sri Pāda not necessarily to deal with the ‘other worldly’ or ‘transcendent’ matters but largely to seek solution for their day to day mundane matters with the help (*pihita*) of both the sacred footprint (or Buddha) and its guardian, God Saman. This indicates a significant change of the purpose of visiting Sri Pāda specifically from merit making to seek alleviation from personal and other forms of misfortunes. As I have shown in previous chapter the journey to Sri Pāda, in the past, was clearly designated as “merit making journey” (*pin gamana*). When considering the scale of the mundane matters that were brought to Sri Pāda temple by pilgrims as indicated by the survey, this prime purpose seems to now have decreased in importance.

Before concluding this chapter let me to more clear about the vow making and wish making as an important practice of the private worship at the Sri Pāda temple. For this I draw attention to Derridian notion of gift-giving and the debt (Derrida 1992) and Jonathan Parry’s the Hindu ‘Law of the gift’ (1986). According to Derrida ‘the gift is impossible’, because its very offering places one immediately in a circle of exchange that turns the gift into a debt for the recipient (1992:7). But he argues a true gift cannot include conditionality or instrumentality: ‘for there to be a gift, there must be no reciprocity, return, exchange, counter gift or debt’ (1992: 12). Similarly, Perry explains that Hindu ideology denies that a ‘true’ gift is made ‘with desire’ for *any* kind of reward. Therefore, Hindu ‘Law of the gift’ does not create society by instituting that constant give-and-take (1986: 462). In this sense making a ‘wish’ (*prarthanāvava*) in front of Buddha or his relics might be count as ‘a kind of unconditional act’ or impossible ‘give-and-take’ transaction because it does not require any sort of return, exchange or debt. This go against the conventional anthropological understanding; the Buddha’s inability of engaging in this worldly affairs because given impression is that he has attained nirvana, and no longer exists, therefore, the gods who govern the pragmatic affairs of the world deal with the human quest. Thus frequent gift (offerings) giving to god reciprocated but of Buddha never reciprocated. In contrast, *prarthanāvava* go completely against this

interpretation. In one hand people do believe that Buddha or his relic can address their this worldly affairs and on the other hand, unlike god, Buddha does not expect anything in return. Therefore, it could be, both Derrida and Perry's sense, a 'true gift' even though 'desire' of receiving something imply in making *prarthanāvava*. Nevertheless, vow need to be fulfilled, once it made, because it is a conditional act or reciprocal one. People ask help from gods through making vows. By helping them gods earn merit or good karma. In other words, gods help human with the goods of the world and alleviate their suffering whilst humans help the gods in their quest for salvation through the transference of merit. This exchange between humans and the gods, like other social exchange, is one of true reciprocity. So, in Derridian sense such exchange cannot be designated as 'true gift' because it is always relies upon conditions or obligations. The unconditional nature in the 'wish' making at Sri Pāda in particular and other Buddhist sacred sites in general would be one reason for it growing popularity among Buddhist pilgrims in contemporary Sri Lanka.

7.8 Conclusion

To summarise, in this chapter I have explored the non-congregational or private religious practices of the pilgrims who visit Sri Pāda Temple. My focus has been the practices, worship and offerings made at both the sacred footprint shrine and the shrine of the God Saman in the temple and I have explained pilgrim's motives behind these activities. Unsurprisingly, most pilgrims seem to visit Sri Pāda to ask for help (*pihita*) with their day today personal crises and needs from a God who has already achieved the first stage of *nirvana* (according to Obeyesekere this type of deity cannot help his worshipper to resolve his mundane problems and personal needs). Help is also sought from the Buddha [or more precisely his relic, the footprint] who is, according to Obeyesekere, totally benevolent and non-involved in the affairs of the world (1963, 1984: 56-58).

The pilgrim's practices, rather their styles of religiosity at Sri Pāda, (as highlighted in the previous chapter) undermine the Weberian antinomies (other-worldly/ this-worldly, Buddha/deities) that have dominated the anthropology of Sinhala Buddhism

in Sri Lanka. As I explain in the last section of this chapter the types of religious behaviour that can be found at Sri Pāda have further complicated, or rather unqualified support of the “this” and “other” worldly syndrome. This because pilgrims bring their ‘this worldly matters’ to the Buddha (his relic: footprint) and the God Saman by deploying different technologies ranging from vow making and offerings to ‘*prarthanāva*’ and ‘grievance notes’. I also show unique differences, mainly reciprocal and non-reciprocal ideology, behind the highly private act like, vow and wish making and the logic behind the cash donation at the temple. I explain how cash donation is used as a merit transferring technique to dead relatives and how it differ from the conventional merit transferring technique in the Theravada Buddhist societies. This private act is meaningless if it is not publicly acknowledged (in this case over public address system of the temple).

It is not so important to understand when such practices began to evolve at Sri Pāda temple but rather that these practices, oriented to Buddha, or more precisely to his relics are not corroborated with the wisdom of conventional anthropological interpretation of ‘Sinhala Buddhism’. I also have discussed such interpretational looseness in relation to deity worship, in particular the propitiation of the God Saman. I have shown that though some anthropologists such as Obeyesekere, claims the importance of the world-involved nature of the benevolent god like Saman has become unimportant with the rise of ‘new urban deities’ such as Kataragama, Kali and Suniyam, people continue to ask help (*pihita*) from the God Saman. This I explain through his personal qualities, compassion (*karūnava*) or kindness, which have apparently become of central value of the pilgrimage site. The nature of problem that pilgrims bring to Sri Pāda is clearly indicated the intrinsic qualities of the god Saman in particular and the Sri Pāda temple in general. The iconographical and mythical representations of the God Saman clearly show such Buddhist characteristics in him. The absence of revenge and curse-removing rituals (even coconut breaking), of trance, and divine and demonic possession at his shrines are further evident of his benevolent qualities. That is why, as I have explained, people are selective about the matters that they bring to his attention, in particular, to the Buddha (sacred footprint).

My statistical and ethnographic information clearly indicates the scale and the nature of matters that are brought before the God Saman and the Buddha. The majority of the misfortunes are either family or personally oriented and it is interesting to note that among them, revenge or counter-revenge activities are totally absent, despite having widely increased in contemporary Sri Lanka overall. This is because performing such activities or simply bringing them to Sri Pāda goes totally against the central Buddhist value, that is *karūṇava*, of the pilgrimage site. This point is supported by Preston who notes “pilgrims typically re-enact the original experiences reported to have occurred at holy sits, rites that link them back to the core values of their tradition” (1992:34). “Un-Buddhist” practices (sorcery, anti- sorcery, trance, demonic possession etc.) have however, as recent studies have shown, ironically become popular largely among the poor peasants and urban fringe dwellers. It is these people, as I will explain in the next chapter who outnumber the other pilgrims participating at Sri Pāda strict into the core value of Sri Pāda temple when seeking solution to their own problems. In the next chapter I will further elaborate on forms of religious behaviour in relation to their sociological backgrounds.

Chapter 8: The Sociological Background of the pilgrims

8.1 Introduction

The sociology of Sinhala Buddhist religion and the direction of its change has been debated and well documented through both anthropological and sociological perspectives. Most studies focus on how Sinhala Buddhism has changed along with social change in Sinhala society in general, and have concentrated on a number of interrelated themes: the nature of “orthodoxy” in contemporary Sinhala Buddhism (e.g., Gombrich: 1971,1990; Southwold: 1983; Carrithers: 1983), the relationship between Buddhism and ritual practices (Leach: 1962; Yalman: 1962; Ames: 1963; Obeyesekere: 1963,1966,1968,1978; Kapferer: 1983,1998; Seneviratne: 1978; Scott: 1994; De Silva: 2000), and the transformation of traditional Sinhala Buddhism over the last century (Malalgoda: 1976; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988; Seneviratne 1999). Some of them have argued, (e.g., Obeyesekere 1970, 1975, 1978; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988 and Kapferer 1983, 1997) that a range of “radical” changes has taken place in the religious practices among Sinhala Buddhists over the last few decades. In other words these studies showed that how changes in popular religion reflected changes in society at large. These significant changes have heightened psychological tensions among the masses particularly the urban poor and the middle class and, as Gananath Obeyesekere argues, both alone and in association with Richard Gombrich, one way of relieving such tensions is to rely on new forms of religious expression (Obeyesekere 1975, 1977,1978,1981; Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988). The growing propitiation of gods such as Kataragama, Huniyam, and goddesses such as Kali [who is replacing Pattini as the main goddess of Sinhala Buddhism], and acts of devotion to the Bo-tree (known as the *bodhi pūjā*) and to figures like Sai Baba, have been the result of a collapse of “traditional order” and the resultant lack of coherence and order in social life. The key to all of these developments is ‘urbanization’, consisting primarily of a ‘breakdown of traditional structures of authority and meaning’ (Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988: 53). They have viewed recent religious changes in terms of class structure. On the broadest level, new religious practices have been explained in relation to ‘the emergence of a large bourgeoisie and an urban proletariat’ classes. They characterise differences between these two classes as follows:

The religious values and ethos that spring from the bourgeoisie and the urban proletariat are not only different from one another but also contrast with traditional village Buddhism. Historically viewed, the crucial components of bourgeois religious values come from Protestant Christianity, especially its Victorian forms. Proletarian religious values [...] go counter to the puritan ethos of the bourgeoisie and find their primary expression in an emotional religiosity derived from Hinduism [*bhakti* devotionism] (1988: 11).

The former has largely, according to Gombrich & Obeyesekere, concerned religious innovation among the middle class and the latter innovations affecting the lower-class people. For example, the rise of lay Buddhist meditation is popular among the middle class, whereas the new deity cults are more popular among the urban poor. Contrary to this formulation, they record among the urban middle class an increase in the popularity of worshipping at the shrines to the deities (Obeyesekere 1970, 1977, Gombrich & Obeyesekere 1988) and in the practice of sorcery (Obeyesekere 1975). It is the Sinhala urban middle class who visit the main shrine of the god Kataragama to ask for his aid and protection before travelling overseas, in business, at times of personal or family misfortune, or before taking an examination (Obeyesekere 1970: 59). Obeyesekere argues that middle class anxiety, frustration, and tension in their daily lives motivate members to the worship of deities. He describes the emergence of deity worship among the urban middle class as symptomatic of the changes in Protestant Buddhism.

Bruce Kapferer (1983) has explored a similar class dynamic when he discusses "A Celebration of Demons" among 'urban' Sinhala Buddhists in and around the Southern port city of Galle. Kapferer argues that "demonic practices" in contemporary Sri Lanka have become predominantly peasant and working class phenomena. Middle class Sinhala Buddhists, according to him, consider such practices of the working class and peasantry not to be confused with "true" Buddhism (1983:31). However, he shows that despite the disapproval of deity worship among certain factions of the middle class, appeal to the deities is more apparent as a middle class practice than it is as a working class or peasant practice (ibid. 32). Increasing middle class worship of the deities, Kapferer argues, is also

associated with various and distinct class related modes of deity worship. He explains that there is a tendency for the middle class to focus on the Buddha and the deities, to the exclusion of the lower reaches of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon. For him that is why middle class are “negatively oriented to demon exorcism” (ibid.). This negative orientation, he argues, is a product of an historical process and is reproduced in the tautology of a cultural logic of a class discourse, which has been instrumental in further creating exorcism as a working class and peasant practice (ibid. 34)²⁷⁵. Kapferer’s formulation is problematic when compared to the sociological background of pilgrims visiting national pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda because, as I will explain, Sri Pāda attracts many pilgrims from ‘peasant and working class’ social backgrounds rather than the so-called “middle class”.

This is a quite unique situation when compared with the other national pilgrimage sites like Kataragama; as Obeyesekere explains ‘people of all social classes and all nominal religious affiliations’ (1988: 163) visit Kataragama throughout the year. He specifically describes the social position of pilgrims at Kataragama, *as* the unemployed educated sons of peasants, politicians, businessmen and big-time crooks in the city of Colombo (1977: 388-389), urban proletariat, mainly ‘from the slums of Colombo...without strong kinship ties, and ..cut off almost totally from traditional peasant society’” (1978: 472). The social position that Obeyesekere describes here is explained in relation to emerging new forms of religious expression, which have developed amongst ‘urban’ Buddhists in Sri Lanka. He develops an argument in terms of the ‘stresses and strains of modern society’ or ‘social disintegration’ that links with the rise of pilgrimage sites like Kataragama and what he calls ‘*bhakti* religiosity’. He tends to focus on groups of people who display particularly strongly externalised ecstatic religiosity: on those who walk the fire (1978) or become priest or priestesses with hair in matted locks (1981); on those who hang on hooks or roll in the hot sand or dance with *kavadi*. These ecstatic forms of religious behaviour are highly visible during the festival at Kataragama. This (ecstatic) Hindu-type devotional religiosity amongst Buddhists, he argues, was initially popular among the urban proletariat and then taken up by the middle class sectors to fulfil their need for

²⁷⁵ I have challenged this view (see De Silva 2000).

an outlet from the constraints and frustrations which economic hardship, with ensuing late marriage, provokes (1978). Though a large contingent of middle class people attend at Kataragama, according to Obeyesekere's description Kataragama is not exclusively for the middle class (ibid.).

Rohan Bastin (2002), has explored similar class relations at Munnesvaram, a popular Tamil Saivite temple with a predominantly Sinhala Buddhist patronage, near the north-west coastal town of Chilaw. He has identified Munnesvaram as a site of not simply attended by the poor, either urban or rural, but by large segment of Middle class Sinhala Buddhists and Tamil Saivites too (2002: 26-34)²⁷⁶. Though Kataragama and Munnesvaram attract large number of middle class pilgrims, Sri Pāda remains a site for pilgrims from the lower social classes.

8.2 'Class' affiliation in Sri Pāda pilgrimage

Let me now explain why I am claiming that Sri Pāda attracts large numbers of pilgrims belonging to lower social positions of Sri Lankan society. My argument here is mainly based on the statistical information that I gathered through a simple survey at the Sri Pāda temple, and that statistical data is supplemented by ethnographical information as well. The social class of the pilgrims can be mainly identified through their occupational affiliation, and the nature of the personal problems that they brought to Sri Pāda seeking 'divine' help (*pihita*). The class affiliation of the Sri Pāda pilgrims will be further discussed through two distinctive sociological categories, namely "youth pilgrims" and "Colombo pilgrims". Such a distinction is highlighted in order to point out the variation evident in pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. These are just two of the possible orientations present among pilgrims to Sri Pāda. Though many youth pilgrims seem to come from a lower social background, there is a considerable number of 'lower middle class' youth also present (e.g., sons and daughters of teachers, traders and clerical workers)²⁷⁷. Interestingly, however, "Colombo pilgrims" basically come from the proletarian

²⁷⁶ Bastin has moved from single class analysis and tries to incorporate other social categories and contrasts such as caste, ethnicity and even locality of the worshippers (insider/outsider).

²⁷⁷ I have also noticed small number of environmentally concern English speaking urban middle class youth operate at Sri Pāda under their respective NGOs. They basically there for conducting range of environment awareness programs for pilgrims rather than having any devotion to the sacred centre.

parts of the capital city of Colombo. In the hands of such “urban poor”, according to Gombrich and Obeyesekere “the [urban] spirit religion” has changed its character (1988: 09) and the values of these people, they assert, are different from those of the bourgeoisie, and also from traditional village Buddhism (1988:11). But my ethnographical information about Sri Pāda does not substantiate this formulation of the “urban poor” as total adherents of urban-based “new spirit cults,” because, as I illustrate later, this so-called “urban poor” are not completely cut off from some of their “traditional religious practices”, (though they practice them in rather different forms today) For example; going on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda, as they describe it, is a continuous practice of generation after generation which can be traced back to their “village roots”. This suggests that “urban poor” are not necessarily adherents of “new spirit cults” but also frequent visitors to a “traditional pilgrimage site” like Sri Pāda.

Before excavating their class affiliation in detail let me to explain some other social characteristics of those people particularly the religious and regional affiliations.

Not surprisingly, as table 8.1 shows the majority (95%) of those who come to Sri Pāda temple claimed to be Buddhist. Less than 5 per cent belong to Hindu, Muslims or Christian groups.

Table 8.1 Religion of pilgrims at Sri Pāda

Religion	Frequency	Percent
Buddhist	880	95
Islam	15	2
Catholic	14	2
Hindu	12	1
Christian	2	0.2
Other	1	0.1
Total	924	100

What is striking at Sri Pāda is the low representation of non-Buddhists groups when compared with pilgrimage sites like Kataragama, where quite sizeable numbers of Hindus, Christians and Muslims pilgrims are to be found.

Moreover, the majority of pilgrims who came to Sri Pāda fail to understand any religious connections to the ‘sacred footprint,’ other than the Buddhist connection. 63 per cent answered ‘don’t know’ about other non-Buddhist religious beliefs around the ‘sacred footprint.’ Only 7 per cent said Sri Pāda had a connection to all major world religions. But some (13%) specifically said that Muslims connect to the ‘sacred footprint’ through the myth of ‘Adam,’ and less than 2 per cent say Christians have a similar mythical connection. Interestingly, only 8 per cent know about the Hindu connection to the ‘sacred footprint’. These statistical figures clearly support one of the main arguments in this work: that is today Sri Pāda pilgrimage site can no longer be viewed as a ‘multi-religious’ and ‘multi-ethnic’ sacred site. The intensity of Buddhization at the current Sri Pāda temple is further reflected through the views of the majority of Buddhist pilgrims.

Table 8.2 Understanding of non-Buddhist connections to Sri Pāda

	Frequency	Percent
Don’t know	583	63
A place of visiting Muslim other than Buddhist	120	13
A place of Hindu other than Buddhist	71	8
All religion accepting this place	66	7
Hindu and Muslim other than Buddhist	50	5
No evidence to prove of other than Buddhist site	20	2
Catholic & Christian other than Buddhist	14	2
Total	924	100

But there is no any restrictions imposed against the attendance of other than Buddhist pilgrims and no hostilities or clashes been reported against non-Buddhists participants at Sri Pāda temple as commonly reported in other major ‘multi-religious’ pilgrimage sites in the world. For example, antagonistic engagement of Jewish, Christians and Muslims at Jerusalem (see: Bowman 1991: 98-121) and situation like Ayodhya in North India describe by Van der Veer (1988). But when the increasing of ethnic tensions between Sinhala and Tamil and then it escalated into full-scale

violence in the beginning of the 1980's the attendance of Hindu pilgrims not only at Sri Pāda but also to the other major Hindu pilgrimage sites in the country such as Kataragama is noticeably decreased. Even under such nationally out break violence situations no religiously or ethnically motivated clashes being reported from Sri Pāda. Generally speaking, as far as pilgrims to the Sri Pāda temple are concerned ethnic and religious differences of them has not been yet reach to hostile situation as it being reported in other parts of the country²⁷⁸. Even under the highly Buddhized situation 'tolerance' attitudes towards even insignificant numbers of the non-Buddhist visitors to Sri Pāda temple by its' authorities and commonly Buddhist pilgrims would be hard to ignore mentioning here. But compare to its pre-colonial and even colonial histories under the recent history (postcolonial) Sri Pāda has been constructed as a predominantly Buddhist site by ignoring its historically viewed religious pluralism.

According to table 8.3, only 14 per cent of those interviewed said that it was their first visit to Sri Pāda. Interestingly, around 50 per cent had visited Sri Pāda between two and five times. Similarly, of the remaining 35 per cent, some had come more than 6 times and some of these had been on anything up to 175 previous occasions. One man, who is a veteran pilgrim's group leader [*nadeguru*] claiming 168 visits. Given that few non-Buddhists came more than once, these figures imply that almost all the Buddhists at Sri Pāda had been before.

Table 8.3 Number of visits by pilgrims to Sri Pāda

	Frequency	Percent
0-1	128	14
2-5	463	50
6-9	155	17
10-13	54	6
14-17	39	4
18-21	27	3
22+	58	6
Total	924	100

²⁷⁸ I am thinking of recent ethnically and religiously motivated clashes between Muslims and Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus and Buddhist against Christians in some parts of the country.

Let me now present some figures on the regional and occupational affiliations of the pilgrims. As table 8.4 shows, over 55 per cent of the pilgrims came to Sri Pāda from the Western and Southern provinces, the two provinces where population density and urbanization is visibly high compared with the rest of the country. Interestingly, most claimed to come from 'villages' rather than towns, but this should not be taken at face value for when one looks at occupation, the pilgrims were in general not agriculturists or fisher folk, the archetypal 'village' occupations, rather the majority were involved in skilled non-agricultural occupations such as drivers, masons, carpenters, mechanics, factory workers, printers, vendors, security services and as unskilled non-agricultural labourers. Also, a small number are involved in white-collar jobs such as teachers, clerks and sales representatives.

Table 8.4 Origin of pilgrims at Sri Pāda by province

	Frequency	Percent
Western	399	43
Southern	110	12
Central	66	7
Sabaragamuwa	239	26
Uva	40	4
North central	27	3
North western	34	4
Eastern	9	1
Total	924	100

Table 8.5 Occupation of pilgrims at Sri Pāda

	Frequency	Percent
Dependent	277	30
Vendors	99	11
Wage labourers	85	9
Cultivators	70	8
Mechanical work	52	6
Mason/Carpenter/Contractor	44	5
Plantation Small holders	43	5
Drivers and conductors	42	5
Clerical	42	5
Garment Factory workers	41	4
Sales assistants	32	4

Security service	22	2
Administrative work	20	2
Teachers and instructors	19	2
Buddhist monks	19	2
Retired from government service	10	1
Middle-East	4	0.4
Self employment	3	0.3
Total	924	100

If we consider the overall occupational background of the pilgrims [dependent as well independent], ‘traditional’ occupations are under-represented among the pilgrims of Sri Pāda whilst ‘modern’ occupations are over-represented. No matter what the specific statistical details are, the picture that emerges is that most of the pilgrims coming to Sri Pāda are wage and salary earners, and even if they do not live in towns, most of them are not ‘traditional peasants’. This is not just a feature of Sri Pāda pilgrimage but also of the general trends in the other pilgrimage sites in ‘modern’ Sri Lanka as well. For example, as Obeyesekere explains most of the pilgrims visiting Kataragama are ‘cut off almost totally [from] traditional peasant society’ (1978: 472). The occupational affiliation of the pilgrims to Sri Pāda is a clear indication of a significant departure from the so called “traditional peasant society”. It is clear by now that many of the pilgrims coming to Sri Pāda are engaged in non-agricultural occupations as well as majority of them being Sinhala Buddhists who belong to the lower social classes of Sri Lankan society. However, it is hard to see any pilgrims from the so called ‘middle-class background’ turn to Sri Pāda. Even the Temple authority is well aware about the absentee of middle class pilgrims and as the Trustee monk of the temple explained to me that it has considerably affected the temple income and he reviled his future plan how he is going to over come the issue by introducing electric cable car system which he believes attract the large number of “high income groups”.

Some ‘professional middle class’ people told me they were reluctant to visit Sri Pāda, not because they do not have any faith in the ‘sacred footprints’, but because of the ‘difficulties’ of the journey. Unlike Kataragama, Kandy or Anuradhapura, where

vehicles can taken close to the sacred grounds, reaching Sri Pāda in order to tap its sacredness requires physical and mental stamina, which might not be found among the 'busy' middle class people in contemporary Sri Lanka. However, the absence of middle class individuals such as big businessmen, wealthy lawyers, doctors and politicians, senior government officers and major landowners is, in my view, a recent phenomenon²⁷⁹. Prior to the colonial regimes, and even well into the colonial period, going on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda was probably common among all ranks and the sections of Sri Lankan society. For example, as I have shown in Chapter 2, Sri Pāda always was an important site for "royal pilgrimage", and even in the British colonial period, the landed local elite groups particularly those of Sabaragamuva, were closely connected to Sri Pāda temple (see Chapter 3).

Moreover, the present class affiliation of Sri Pāda pilgrims can also be demonstrated through the social background of the temple patrons, particularly the patrons of the merit making rituals (*pinkama*). As I have explained in Chapter 5, the some pilgrims began to sponsor rather than organise the full moon day *pinkama* in the 1970s and some of them even continue to do so until the present time. Interestingly, as I have shown in the table 5.2 almost all of them come from lower social backgrounds other than the so-called 'middle class'. As table 5.2 indicates, most *pinkamas* are sponsored by people who come from less educated and non-professionals social backgrounds. For example: carpenters, vegetable cultivators, and vendors. This is quite contrary to the situation of even a village temple where such *pinkama* is usually dominated by the leading Buddhist families or the *dāyaka sabhava* (lay temple association), which is again normally controlled by the same people. This is quite clear in the urban areas, as Kapferer shows 'it is the middle class [throughout the southern capital city of Galle] who control the lay Buddhist temple associations, who are involved in the appointment of new monks, and who are concerned with the morality of monks, with the organization of temple donations, with improvements and additions to temple structures, and with the organization of major Buddhist

²⁷⁹ The absence of middle class representation at contemporary Sri Pāda cannot be further explained because limited information on that particular aspect. Hence, one needs further research on this important aspect of Sri Pāda pilgrimage.

calendrical events centering on the temple' (1983: 25-26). And he concludes, 'the temples have become a largely middle class preserve' (ibid.). I agree with his point but such formulation does not explain the situation of the national pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda where temple patrons largely come from the non-middle-class backgrounds even though unlike middle class patrons, they are incapable of challenging or gaining control over the temple authorities.

The situation in Sri Pāda is quite different from that in other national pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka. Elizabeth Nissan shows that the major *pinkamas* at the national pilgrimage site of Anuradhapura are always sponsored or organised by middle class dominated lay Buddhist associations found around the 1930s and 1950s but those associations differ from a *dayaka sabhava* because they are attached to no particular temple. She describes the activities of two of those associations (The *Pushapadāna Sāmitiya* and the *Bauddha Mandalaya*), which have separate branches to organise such major *pinkamas* at the other major pilgrimage sites in the island (1985: Chapter 2). The absence of such associations, and of middle class operation at the Sri Pāda is further confirmed that the even high level major Buddhist calendrical events centred at this temple are predominantly organised by pilgrims of non-middle class²⁸⁰.

The class affiliation of the pilgrims visiting Sri Pāda temple can be further explained by analysing the personal problems that they brought to Sri Pāda for help from the 'divine power' attached to the temple. As I have shown in Chapter 7 around 75 per cent of pilgrims visiting Sri Pāda temple either made vows or wishes on personal or family problems. Among those, issues related to employment, education, marriage and health were significantly important. Pilgrims don't come to Sri Pāda to take revenge or harm enemies through sorcery or to perform curse-removing rituals, entering into trance and possession (more commonly found among the lower strata of the Sri Lankan society, see Obeyesekere 1981, Kapferer 1997). In my view, the issues that they brought into the Sri Pāda temple are strongly related to the central value of the temple that I have discussed in the previous Chapter. From a Buddhist

²⁸⁰ This is not true for the major temple festival of March (*mādin pinkama*), the sponsors of such *pinkama* have recently been taken over by the some influential middle class families and organisations.

point of view, Sri Pāda is a religious site, emphasising the highest Buddhist value of “*karūṇava*” or “compassion” (“kindness”). Such value is mainly represented through the qualities of its guardian deity Saman to whom some pilgrims direct the problems to be solved. This moral quality of Sri Pāda plays a vital role to attract a large number of under privilege Buddhist subjects to the temple. Noticeably, these are the class of people who don’t get much attention or any sort of a ‘kindness’ from the ruling and the privilege classes of Sri Lankan society.

This distinction can be further elaborated through a particular example of the professional trance consultants or spirit mediums of whom the vast majority are Sinhala Buddhist women popularly known as *māniyo* (mothers). Obeyesekere (1981) describes *māniyo* as strongly independent women who, through their ability to enter trance, operate as private religious consultants. Kapferer also provides more information on *māniyo* as a group and states that they often come from the urban poor (1997: 247). This is also true in Obeyesekere’s analysis of those trance specialists at Kataragama (1981). But Bastin reports at Munnesvaram, that there are some *māniyo* whose social background is not urban poor, but middle class (2002: 71). However, all are in agreement that most *māniyo* are devotees of new urban deities such as Kataragama, Kali and Huniyam.

I met several of these *māniyo* at the Sri Pāda temple, and almost all of them were belong to the underprivileged social classes, either urban or rural and nearly all of them are unmarried or no longer married. Surprisingly, at Sri Pāda, their religious behaviour is completely different from the situation described by Obeyesekere at Kataragama (1981) and Bastin at Munnesvaram (2002: 70-72). The strongly externalised devotional and ecstatic behaviours (dance, trance and possess) of those *māniyo* are completely absent when they present themselves at the Sri Pāda temple.

Some were in the process of becoming priestess but still need sufficient merit to obtain the power [permission] or boon of speak ‘*mūka varam*’. Such priestesses were basically engaged in various merit making activities at Sri Pāda such as observing *sil* (the eight precepts) and make offerings to Buddha and deity Saman. In addition some

wanted to 'consecrate' ('*pē*') the sacred insignia (*deva ābarana*) which they have possessed, both at the sacred footprint and the shrine of the deity Saman. Many adopt an emphasis on Buddhist doctrinal values: *dāna* (generosity), *sila* (morality) and *bhavana* (meditation) in order to accrue merit (*pin*), as I have described in the case of Patirana *māniyo*, one of the pinkama sponsors at Sri Pāda in the Chapter 5. Through those pious Buddhist activities, many of them wanted to recharge their own ritual potency or gain to develop such special skills in the future. The attraction of this special group of women to Sri Pāda is further reviled that what kind of a sacred place that Sri Pāda is. The central quality of the temple is, in my view, clearly undermined the ecstatic form of religiosity that practiced by similar group of *māniyo* in other pilgrimage sites. The religious behaviour of *māniyo* at Sri Pāda is clearly indicated the complexity of lower class religiosity of the contemporary Sri Lanka. So, labelling them as strong adherents of new urban deities, as Obeyesekere and Kapferer claim, must be treated with scepticism.

In Sri Pāda, the element of expressive emotion can be found through devotional songs and friendly greeting (even modified versions of them), which have a different tone of collective devotion (oriented to Buddha or the deity Saman) from the expressive emotion of pilgrims at Kataragama. Also, unlike at Kataragama, the devotional and expressive forms of religiosity are not new for adherents of Sri Pāda pilgrimages. Not only do Sri Pāda pilgrims show visible religious behaviour through the singing of devotional songs and their friendly greetings, but also their personal devotion is physically 'externalised' through the arduous journey to the sacred mountain. At Kataragama 'devotional ecstasy' is expressed through dance and trance, loud music, fire walking, hanging from hooks, and so on. At Sri Pāda, it is expressed through rather different forms such as the singing of devotional songs and arduous climbing. Both involve 'the body' excessively but differently.

The externalised form of devotional religious behaviour at Sri Pāda can be found long before the advent of Hindu-type '*Bhakti* religiosity' as described by Obeyesekere (1978) among the 'urban poor' of the country. It does not mean Obeyesekere is wrong, but what is striking here is that 'expressive devotion' is not

new to those 'peasant' and 'working' class people who are more or less annually visit to Sri Pāda. This shows that any generalization of those people's religious behaviours has to be cautiously made, partly because their religious behaviour may vary from the central values of the sites and the quality of the gods and goddesses that they worship. But it might not always be the case, some groups from similar social backgrounds can be unadjusted or compete with the intrinsic value of those sites. Such a situation can be illustrated through two different groups of pilgrims who quite largely visible at Sri Pāda: 'Colombo pilgrims' and "Youth pilgrims". Let me start with the former.

8.3 'Colombo pilgrims'

Before the start of the pilgrimage season one of my informants who runs a small tea-shop for the pilgrims, told me that during March a large number of pilgrims would come from Colombo (*kolamba kattiya*), and their presence at Sri Pāda would give him a considerable amount of income compared to other months of the pilgrimage season. For this reason I was eager to see these '*kolamba kattiya*' (lit. contingent of Colombo). As my informant predicted pilgrims came from Colombo in large groups; basically with their families, relatives and friends. Almost every group consisted of male/female, young/elderly, and even children/babies. Interestingly, as I later found, most of these pilgrims came from the so-called underprivileged areas of the capital city²⁸¹. Large numbers seemed to come from the North and the West Colombo slums [areas such as Maradana (Colombo 10), Kotahena and Dematagoda (Colombo 9)] where a large number of 'urban poor', both Sinhala and Tamil, can be found. Though they had come from the underprivileged areas of the city of Colombo, most of them were dressed in their best 'western' clothes, rarely in traditional white, some men and women had covered their necks and hands with jewellery and fancy items. Many spent lavishly on food, drinks and souvenirs.

Unlike other pilgrims, they did not rush home, but spent a few days either in the Southern or Northern pilgrimage bazaar towns in order to relax, take river baths and basically 'enjoy' themselves with their families, relatives and friends. This Colombo

²⁸¹ For a general discussion of their life patterns, see K.T. Silva and K Athukorala (1991).

contingent usually comes to Sri Pāda during the month of March, particularly around the *mādin* full moon day festival, (hence locals in the Sri Pāda area used to call that festival day as '*kolamba pōya*' the full moon day of Colombo people). During this period several special trains run from Colombo to Hatton, the plantation town neighbouring the northern pilgrimage bazaar. Their presence at Sri Pāda creates a more vibrant and colourful atmosphere, both during the journey and at the temple. Like other pilgrims they usually worship and make offerings, both at the footprint shrine and the shrine of the god Saman as well. I noticed, many offered the fruit basket (*pūjā vatti*) to the god Saman, either on releasing the vows that they had made in previous visits, or in seeking a general blessing from the god. The temple staff, though they were critical about their general behaviour at the temple, agreed that the visit of 'Colombo pilgrims' to Sri Pāda resulted in a large increment of temple income compared with other months.

The visit to the Sri Pāda temple for these 'Colombo pilgrims' is a very important event in their annual religious calendar. As some of the pilgrims I interviewed told me, they begin to prepare for the Sri Pāda journey well before the commencement of the pilgrimage season. They used to save money with the aim of undertaking the Sri Pāda journey every year. Many of them save the money through the rotating credit system popularly known as "*seittu*". This system is most popular among rural and urban women of low-income groups. Considerable numbers of people from these underprivileged neighbourhoods, however, go on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda with the support of individual sponsors in these neighbourhoods. These sponsors are basically influential men of their communities and they can be characterized as "strong men" in the sense of wealth and power. Most of these sponsors make money by engaging in "illegal business" in their respective communities. Under such personal sponsorship the expenses of the entire pilgrims group would be looked after by those "strong men". In turn, pilgrims in such a group would offer respect, obedience and behave under the sponsor's words throughout the journey. This kind of personal sponsorship among "Colombo pilgrims" seems not to be an old arrangement, but rather a recent innovation that cannot be even found among other pilgrims groups.

Emergence of such personal sponsors for the pilgrim's group is a clear departure from the 'traditional' arrangement of the pilgrim's groups [*nade*] discussed in Chapter 6. One informant from the Colombo pilgrims told me how he went on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda with a *nade* of his neighbourhood, normally organised by a *nadegura*, and prior to the pilgrimage how he taught how to sing "*tunsarana*" (devotional songs) and advised them on practice self restraint during the journey, and how the *nade* respected and obeyed the authority of the *nadegura*. Such an arrangement is no doubt very similar to the formation of a village pilgrim group in many ways. Hence, one could consider such arrangements as the continuation of village level pilgrimage practices in a highly urbanised context. Certainly, such practices would have been brought to the capital city of Colombo by people who had migrated from villages, who eventually became working class city dwellers²⁸². However, like other pilgrim's groups, the arrangement of today's Colombo groups has undergone a set of changes, for example the emergence of an individual sponsor for certain pilgrim's groups from the predominantly proletarian parts of Colombo. Under this sponsorship, pilgrims' expenses for travel, food, drink and accommodation would be covered. One such sponsor justified his spending as "meritorious giving" and he firmly believes such an act would help him to successfully conduct his own business. These new sponsors not only expect to gain material benefit, but also seek personal honour from fellow pilgrims. In other words

²⁸² Historically speaking, some of the ancestors of these slum communities were highly engaged in collective 'Buddhist activities' at Sri Pāda, particularly building up *ambalam* (pilgrim's rests), supplying drinking water and free foods for pilgrims (*dansala*). As I briefly mentioned in Chapter 6 some of their descendants still operate some *dansalas* particularly during the time of their own [Colombo] pilgrims come to Sri Pāda. The collective 'Buddhist activities' of these city dwellers at Sri Pāda, no doubt can be recognised as what John Rogers calls "non-elite participation of the Buddhist revival activities" (see 1997:323-333). The Buddhist revival began in last quarter of the nineteenth century by the upwardly mobile elites against the cultural encroachment of Christianity but as Rogers correctly points out studies of the revival have not yet dealt systematically the non-elite activities in the Buddhist revival (ibid. 324). One such non-elite activist was H. Salamon Singho who was trained as tailor. In 1913 he started a society called "*Sripadabhivadaka dāna samitiya*" with the intention of supplying free food and drink (*dansala*) for the pilgrims who largely visit Sri Pāda around the full moon day in March with the help of the donations from pious Buddhists. In 1926 the society constructed an *ambalama* at the Seetangangula of the Kuruvita path where it gave *dansala* for thirty nine years. After the death of Salamon Singho in 1954 the society ceased to function. (This brief information was obtained from a pamphlet belonging to his daughter. She gave me a copy of the pamphlet but was reluctant to talk much about her father).

these new sponsors seem to me to enjoy a sense of leadership among fellow pilgrims that was previously enjoyed by traditional pilgrims leaders, *nadegura*.

Some aspects of this description of “Colombo pilgrims” can be illustrated by a few case studies, which I have gathered at one of the overcrowded working class slum neighbourhoods in the North of Colombo, Kotahena. This overcrowded slum neighbourhood, called Belinwatta, is closely situated to the Colombo port where most people in the community work as port labourers as did their ancestors. [Interestingly many of their roots go back to the southern province of the island where they originally came from before settling in this part of the city as workers of Colombo port during its expansion under British colonial rule.] This area contains an important Buddhist temple; Dipaduttamaramaya which once enjoyed virtual hegemony over the nineteenth-century Buddhist revival, particularly its resistance to Christian missions under the revivalist activities of oracle monk Mohottivatte Gunananda, from a Southern coastal town who presided over the temple for nearly fifty years. Though this community has its own temple now, some people still maintain their connection with the historically important Dipaduttamaramaya. There is a small Hindu temple in the community where the Tamil segment of the community regularly make offering to the god Murukan. Interestingly, both Sinhala and Tamil people in this community speak both languages fluently and live in considerable peace.

I met Ebert and Ananda at the Sri Pāda temple and briefly interviewed them there, but then made a few follow-up interviews with them at their own community. Let’s talk about Ebert first.

Case A. Ebert Zoysa was born of Sinhala Buddhist parents in 1944. He is now fifty-nine years old. His father was a port labourer at the Colombo port as was his grandfather. Ebert’s grandfather originally came from the Southern coastal area called Dadalla near Matara, similarly his mother’s father also came from the neighbouring area called Gandara. Ebert’s father married in 1942 and he was the second eldest of seven children; six of them are alive at present. All of Ebert’s siblings are male except the youngest. Ebert went to Gunananda primary School at Kotehena up to grade five. He is bilingual. He

can read and speak Tamil in addition to his mother tongue Sinhala. Several years after leaving school, Ebert became a port labourer following in the footsteps of his father and his father's father. In 1999 he retired. Now he runs own three-wheel taxi for a living. Ebert has three children, all of them married except the youngest son. Ebert made his first journey to Sri Pāda when he was fourteen, and according to his calculation he has visited Sri Pāda thirty five times so far. On one of those visits he first met his marriage partner who came from a neighbouring proletariat part of the city. When I met Ebert at Sri Pāda he was with a *nade* of twenty-seven; all of them belonged to his extended family apart from a few friends. The journey to Sri Pāda in Ebert words is "religious as well as an enjoyable".

He continues my parents used to take us to Sri Pāda from our childhood, we do exactly the same thing for our children. I took my children to Sri Pāda when they were babies. We go to Sri Pāda every year, but we don't go to Kataragama every year unless we have to fulfil a vow. Sri Pāda is the journey that everybody in this area would hardly miss. People enjoy going to Sri Pāda, but we actually enjoy ourselves after finishing our worship. The worship of the sacred footprint and the god Saman is the main purpose of our visit to Sri Pāda. Every year I offer a fruit tray (*pūjā vatti*) to god Saman even when I do not make a vow at his shrine. After all of these activities at the *maluwa* (temple) we enjoy ourselves with our families and friends by spending one or two days at Palabaddala or Nallatanni (the small towns the foothill of Sri Pāda). But today many people take Sri Pāda pilgrimage as entirely 'vinoda gamanak' (a pleasure trip) particularly young people. They hardly perform the customs and the practices (*sirith-virith*), which are appropriate to Sri Pāda journey. Therefore, unlike in the past the miraculous power (*hāskam*) at Sri Pāda has been disappearing. For example: there is no rush for large numbers of people is presented at the temple (even it has a very limited space) but today the belief in such miracles don't happened. We still come to Sri Pāda because if we don't make this journey each year we feel like something has not happened to our life (*siri pāde nogiyāma aduvak vage dēnenava*). Even one or two months after the journey we talk about our

experiences with our neighbours and friends by doing that we enjoy it some time laugh and make jokes. Sometime we start to talk about similar things just prior to the next journey. When our neighbours get ready to go to Sri Pāda we also make our plans for the next journey. When the pilgrimage season comes in each year no one dares to ignore it. I would say it is our annual journey that our parent trained us to undertake from our childhood we still enjoy (he means both sacred and secular manner) visiting Sri Pāda.

Case B. Ananda is an unmarried Sinhala Buddhist man in his late twenties and has become a well-known moneylender in this area. He runs this business together with his mother and brother and has not allowed others to taken up business in the neighbourhood. Ananda has been visiting Sri Pāda since he was nine, and when I met him at the Sri Pāda temple he was just completing his fourteenth journey together with a group that he had sponsored. According to his words:

We visit Sri Pāda every year, I would be really disappointed if I missed it. When the pilgrimage season comes it is so difficult for me to avoid the Sri Pāda journey. During the month of March everybody talk about the Sri Pāda journey. It is not like the journey to Kataragama, we don't go to Kataragama every year but we all go to Sri Pāda every year. If some one doesn't have money to go to Sri Pāda, people voluntarily support them. This time I took thirty people including myself. I looked after all their expenses, that cost me Rs.30, 000 but some people may think that I am a "foolish"²⁸³. I spend that amount of money because people like me strongly believe that spending money on Sri Pāda pilgrimages will encourage us to run our business successful manner. I believe that god Saman helps such people. I have already experienced it myself on several occasions. On one occasion I was about to do a profitable deal [brokerage of land] with a company, before that deal I visited Sri Pāda and asked help of the god Saman by making a vow. Surprisingly, the deal was succeeded. I don't usually offer fruit basket (*pūjā vatti*) to god Saman as other business people do in our area but I offer money

²⁸³ He used the term "*mōra*" (lit. 'shark' but no relevance at all to it real meaning) such language expression is commonly found in the every day language of people living in these part of the City.

to him and the footprint because my business is directly connected with the money. I know many people not like me they do “bad business” such as drug dealing, selling illicit liquor, running gambling centers. They earn a lot of money by doing such businesses when they go to Sri Pāda they wear a lot of jewellery on their hands and necks to show their richness to others but I know some were wearing imitation jewellery. I myself wear jewellery but not imitations. I remember when I was a child, our whole family was taken to Sri Pāda by a person who sold illicit liquor. He is still taking pilgrims to Sri Pāda with his own money. Since we began our own business we don’t go behind them. I have my own group now, I take them to Sri Pāda each year, and anybody would like to join into my pilgrim group they all are welcome, I have the courage to look after them. I usually take my group to Sri Pāda by train as most others do. In the train we enjoy ourselves by singing, dancing and joking with each other. Most of the train carrying pilgrims from Colombo is occupied by the pilgrims from our part of the city. Sometime fighting erupts between different pilgrim’s groups when they try to over occupy the train seats. On one occasion, two of my group broke their teeth, and some of them were taken into police custody and as a result we had to cancel our journey. These things are happen every year; it may also happen in the pilgrimage bazaar towns when all the people from Colombo gather there. Once we get to the pilgrimage bazaar town, Nallatanni, we stay there over night and then go to the Sri Pāda temple and return to Nallatani. At Nallatanni we enjoy ourselves for at least three days with our fellow pilgrims. Some years, after spending a few days at Sri Pāda we make a trip to the hill resort city of Nuwara Eliya to have more fun.

These two accounts give us a different picture of the pilgrims who visit Sri Pāda from lower class social backgrounds. As I mentioned before most “Colombo pilgrims” come to Sri Pāda from the overcrowded working-class slums, though some of them have managed to accumulate a certain amount of money through “illegal business” and have become pilgrim’s sponsors like Ananda (case B) in their respective neighbourhood. As the two case studies show, the journey of “Colombo pilgrims” to Sri Pāda is not necessarily entirely religious, but it combines seeking

'divine' help and 'pleasure'. The latter purpose seems to have developed more recently.

Gombrich & Obeyesekere who co-authored the massive book, "Buddhism Transformation" (1988), have detailed the religiosity of the "urban proletarian" class, in which city slum dwellers like my "Colombo pilgrims" are predominantly represented. According to them "urban proletarians" are the adherents of new urban spirit cults that have emerged around three deities, namely Huniyam, Kali, and especially Kataragama. The popularity of these deities among the proletarians, according to them, is further evident in the emergence of new shrines dedicated to them in the proletarian parts of the city. Specifically, in these areas Kali and Huniyam have become increasingly important (*ibid.*). In my view, however, their interpretation of the religiosity of the urban proletarian class has failed to understand its connection to "traditional" pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda or the purpose of their visiting those sites. Detailed accounts are provided of the increasing prominence of the three deities among the people belong to this particular class and their forms of religiosity are identified as "new spirit cults" (1988: 65-163) in the "disordered modern society" (1988:100).

This process has been identified in broad psychological terms. Gombrich & Obeyesekere attribute the key to the emergence of '*bhakti* religiosity' as 'urbanisation', consisting primarily of a 'breakdown of traditional structures of authority and meaning' (*ibid.* 53), the failure of the economy to meet the aspirations of the people, a political system which encourages unrealistic aspirations, and mass universal education, which, in turn, increases social aspirations. Such changes, according to them, have heightened the psychological tensions of the masses and one way of relieving such tensions is to rely on new forms of religious devotionalism. As I have shown elsewhere such an analysis fails to see how so-called "traditional forms of religiosity" are engaging in continually innovative practices, albeit in different forms in contemporary Sri Lanka (De Silva 2000). Their investigation has failed to identify 'continuity' as well as the 'changes' in the 'old' forms of religiosity.

As I have demonstrated people belonging to the “urban proletarian” class are still attracted in large numbers to sites like Sri Pāda, where Buddha, and the most benevolent deities like god Saman, have long been worshipped and honoured. Though the motivations of “Colombo pilgrims”, like other pilgrims to today’s Sri Pāda vary from devotional forms of worship to the extreme position of seeking pleasure, the point is that Sri Pāda has continued to flourish as a pilgrimage site that attracts people from lower-class social backgrounds.

8.4 “Youth Pilgrims”: A version of youth pilgrimage to Sri Pāda.

Like Colombo Pilgrims, there is another distinctive ‘pilgrim contingent’ which can be easily identified among the pilgrims visiting contemporary Sri Pāda. These groups predominantly consist of young people, mainly male, who come to Sri Pāda in large numbers in each pilgrimage season. Like Colombo Pilgrims, this is another remarkable sociological feature that I have found among Sri Pāda pilgrims. These “youth pilgrims” visit Sri Pāda with different motivations and intentions, both “religious” and “secular”. But sizable numbers among them are not all that interested in religion. Admittedly, they may perform certain rituals at the temple, but on their own admission they are there for pleasure (*venode*) rather than because of any great devotion to the sacred footprint and the god Saman. More or less, almost all youth pilgrims seek pleasure as a significant component of their journey to Sri Pāda.

The sociology of Sri Lankan youth in general, and their ‘culture’ (religiosity) in particular has not been sufficiently explored by scholars. The first attempt of such analysis, however, was made by Gananath Obeyesekere in his article on ‘the Social Backgrounds of the 1971 youth insurgency’ (1974: 367-383). Since then there has been no systematic attempt to analyse youth as a distinctive “sociological category”. However, the works of S.T. Hettige (1996, 1998 and Hettige & Mayer 2002) are exceptional in this regard. Though his works concentrate on broader aspects of youth life in contemporary Sri Lanka, such as the socio-economic and politico-cultural, the religiosity of young people has remained out of focus. What is interesting about his work, however, is the claim he made based on the data from a nationwide youth survey; that ‘80 percent of Sri Lankan youth consider themselves to be religious’

irrespective of their educational attainment (Hettige & Mayer 2002: 30). In my view, the validity of such a statistical claim of macrocosm needs to be tested in 'microcosm' in order to understand "the ground situations of youth religiosity" in (post) modern Sri Lanka. I want to test this claim in relation to youth pilgrim's participation at Sri Pāda.

The only brief study on youth religiosity in Sri Lanka so far produced by anthropologists is that by H.L. Seneviratne and Swarna Wickmermatne. They discussed "collective representations of Sri Lanka youth" (1980) around a new form of religiosity popularly known as *Bodhipūjā* which became a centrally visible phenomenon particularly among 'educated urban middle class youth' in the mid 1970's (1980:734:743). They identified the popularity of the monk Ariyadhamma *Bodhipūjā* and the secular musical performances of Victor Ratnayaka as the pathways to temporarily ameliorate the *asahanaya* (strain or oppression) of the youth. The youth of Sri Lanka have, in a real sense, lost their way and naturally feel a sense of frustration and oppression. This socio-psychological condition is often expressed by the youth themselves and by their interpreters as *asahanaya* (ibid.). *Asahanaya* for Seneviratne and Wickmermatne must be relieved socially before individuals find their distinctive, private solace and the new *Bodhipūjā* provides such a rite of collective amelioration (ibid.). The attraction of a large number of young people to pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda may or may not be interpreted as such a pathway but I don't want to fall into this kind of psychological interpretation of youth pilgrims going to Sri Pāda. My inquiry on youth participation in the Sri Pāda pilgrimage is based on two basic anthropological questions: what do young people do when they come to Sri Pāda? What do they say about their journey to Sri Pāda?

The emergence of young pilgrims' groups going to popular pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda might be a recent phenomenon because traditionally pilgrims journeys to those sites would be a collective village exercise, based on their kin groups or fellow villagers. As I have explained in Chapter 6, one distinctive departure is the emergence of new group leaders, among the youth pilgrims in particular, and all pilgrims in general. Surprisingly, these new pilgrims' groups, particularly the youth

pilgrim groups going to popular pilgrimage sites in the country have not been focused on by the anthropologists who have worked in those sites (e.g., Obeyesekere 1981, Seneviratne 1978, Nissan 1985). They do not identify the ‘youth pilgrim’ as a distinctive category among the other pilgrims visiting those sites. This might be the result of the under representation of “youth pilgrims” at those sites but I don’t think this is a valid answer. My point here is that such analysis failed to understand the diversity and complexity of the pilgrims [individuals and groups] turning to those popular pilgrimage sites in postcolonial Sri Lanka. However one may be aware of the difficulties of “understanding” or giving reasonable account of the whole spectrum of pilgrims who influx annually into the popular pilgrimage sites, I do believe the diversity and complexity of pilgrims participation at those pilgrimage sites cannot easily be pushed aside.

In this framework I recognise “youth pilgrims” as a distinctive category in the context of Sri Pāda pilgrimage and I see Sri Pāda as a site where an unprecedented youth population has been attracted. Such youth representation at Sri Pāda is clearly shown in the following table:

Table 8.6 Age of pilgrims to Sri Pāda.

Age	Frequency	Percent
15-19	142	15
20-29	310	33
30-39	127	14
40-49	133	14
50-59	135	15
60-69	53	6
70+	24	3
Total	924	100

Source: Simple Survey in 2002.

According to the table nearly half (48%) of the pilgrims interviewed belonged to the age group between 15 and 29 years and most of them were young men²⁸⁴. This age group constitutes around 30% of the total population of the country (see the census of 2001). Why is such a large contingent of the youth population attracted to Sri Pāda? In my view, it is not easy to discard their presence at Sri Pāda as “pleasure

²⁸⁴ Out of the 924 people we interviewed at Sri Pāda 40% were female and 60% male.

seekers” or “unfaithful pilgrims” as some critiques describe judge their behaviour at Sri Pāda. Attitudes of local people in the Sri Pāda area towards ‘youth pilgrims’ might be well demonstrated through the following phrase I picked from a child selling cigars to passing young people “Disco *aýyalata* (brother)– Rambo *suruttu* (cigar)- (Disco brothers have Rambo cigars) *maluvatama ekai* (only one cigar needed for the way up to the temple)”. Many local people believe young people come to Sri Pāda not for worship (*vandinna nove*) but for pleasure (*vinodayata ēnne*).

No doubt many youth do go to Sri Pāda for more than worshipping the sacred footprint and the deity, or than seeking favour from its divine powers for their worries and frustration. Their behaviour, elaborate cosmetic efforts, and display of fashion and clothing, clearly indicate some of their intentions in visiting Sri Pāda. Many youth pilgrims I spoke to clearly said their visit to Sri Pāda was both based on worship and on seeking “fun” (*vinoda*), whereas a small number emphasised that their presence at Sri Pāda was entirely for “fun”, or otherwise for worshipping (*vandinna*) the sacred footprint. The youth groups who entirely seek “fun” at Sri Pāda, as we found, visit Sri Pāda more than once in a pilgrimage season. Also, a large number of such groups who were not religiously motivated had come from a non-Buddhist religious backgrounds. Though some such extreme cases can be found at Sri Pāda, in general it is hard to understand the entire youth population at Sri Pāda in terms of conventional division between the “secular” and the “sacred”.



Picture 8.1 A group of youth pilgrims at Sri Pāda temple

But their behaviour and activities at Sri Pāda have become constantly attacked by certain individuals and institutions. One elderly person told me: “today we don’t see people come for worshipping (*vandanava nove ēnne*), instead they come for pleasure

(*vinoda venna*). Similar criticism²⁸⁵ can be easily found in newspaper articles, editorials, and conversations etc. Let me extract a few paragraphs from two long articles on the popular weekend newspapers, in order to show their critical views on the emerging style of youth pilgrim's behaviour at Sri Pāda. The first one:

"....On a recent visit to the peak [Sri Pāda] it seemed that to more people especially youngsters, Adam's Peak was merely a place for an enjoyable trip with several ideal places for picnics. The old songs, which...Buddhist pilgrims sang...have given way to current "pop songs" sung with much laughter and shouts. A few groups of pious villagers continue to chant the old songs...but this seems to be an exception...."²⁸⁶

The second criticism appeared in an editorial with the title of "pilgrimage or picnic?"²⁸⁷:

"[T]his is shocking but true. Now the Sri Pāda pilgrim season is on and all you have to do is to go to the hills to see these for yourself ...After observing closely for the past two months of what is really taking place in the Hatton-Maskeliya area [one of the pilgrimage bazaar towns], I am more than shocked...The jet-set, mod looking youngsters who make up a large segment of the pilgrims consider it a picnic and not a pilgrimage.....The poems sung while climbing has become a joke to them. They sing their own version of poems much to the annoyance to the genuine pilgrims. Young girls are their targets. The modes of dress are far from decent.... heavy drinking [of alcohol]some have come with their sweethearts..... These are some of the shocking acts of the youngsters who desecrate this holy place.....If this allowed to go unchecked even the genuine pilgrims who undertake this arduous pilgrimage will give way to these pseudo pilgrims and fun seekers. The doings of these youngsters is detrimental to the spirit of the pilgrimage."

²⁸⁵ For example; '*siripa gamane yedena sinhala hippyio*' (Sinhalese hippies journeying to Sri Pāda) a newspaper article written by Rev. Pallekiruve Piyananda (*Divaina* 12/021984), '*siripa gamana mod velada?*' an editorial appearing in *budusarana* (a Buddhist news paper) 6th March 1985.

²⁸⁶ Cited from an article written by Marina Ismail of The Sunday Times 'Climbing Adam's Peak: pilgrimage or picnic?' 10/03/93.

²⁸⁷ Times 21/04/1973.

Of course a sizeable proportion of people, particularly young men and women do not treat the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda as a serious religious journey today. Admittedly, they may worship the footprint and the deity Saman, and even offer a few coins (*panduru*) at those two places, but on their own admission they are journeying to Sri Pāda for pleasure (*vinoda*)²⁸⁸ rather than because of any great devotion to Buddha or the deity Saman.

This situation is somewhat similar to that Jock Stirrat describes about the Sinhala Catholic youth who visit the main Catholic pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka, particularly Madhu and Talawila. Stirrat reports that ‘most of these pleasure seekers are young men, and the place where they have all this fun is in the jungle around the shrine. They try to entice their girlfriends, smoke ganja, drink alcohol and visit prostitutes’ (1982: 409). I can easily add a few other activities to the Stirrat list such as chasing behind girls, sometimes women, to exchange addresses and telephone numbers. Such pleasure activities are not uncommon among young men at today’s Sri Pāda. But in my view, they are not all there only for seeking fun. At the temple, they do engage in personal religious practices, particularly making vows and wishes (*prartanāva*) on issues that are most common to young people in contemporary Sri Lanka like unemployment, education, and marriages. Apart from that, they have also become innovators in transforming existing pilgrims’ religious practices at Sri Pāda. As I have explained in Chapter 6, innovations include the modified version of devotional songs, *tunsarana*, and the friendly greetings, which are more apparent during the climbing. More interestingly the introduction of the new youth pilgrim’s leaders known as ‘manager’ against the archetypal pilgrim’s leaders, *nadegura*, clearly mark out a new direction of changes that have been emerging as result of the so-called “youth pilgrims” participation at Sri Pāda.

The youth come to Sri Pāda today cannot be simply explained through their secular activities. Many youths, as the following case study shows consider their journey to

²⁸⁸ Gombrich & Obeyesekere (1988:191-195) have interpreted the word ‘*vinoda*’ in relation to Sinhala-Buddhist pilgrims going to Kataragama and conclude, “In Sinhala consciousness *vinoda* does not contradict the “sacred” aspects of Kataragama but is intrinsic to the latter” (192p). But such an interpretation could not help us to understand the distinct behaviour of the young pilgrims whose activities seems to contradict the sanctity of Sri Pāda. Conversely, in Kataragama, *vinoda* is expressed as ‘the joyous, playful dimension of the god’s cult’ (191p), which therefore does not contradict with pilgrim’s behaviour.

Sri Pāda is an occasion for enjoyment combined with religious worship. The youth find in both their secular and sacred activities a focus for experiencing at Sri Pāda what Victor Turner (1969: 94-203, 1978) calls “communitas”. The following section will explain how youth pilgrims experience both the “secular” and the “sacred” during this particular journey known as “pilgrimage”. This I reflect through a particular detailed case study of a youth pilgrim:

Sugath²⁸⁹ is a twenty-two year old male youth from Moratuwa in the Western province. Currently, he is doing an undergraduate course in a local university. Sugath has one brother and a sister. His sister got married recently and his brother is expecting to sit for the Ordinary Level examination at the end of the year. Sugath’s family is heavily dependent on his mother, who has been working as a housemaid in a middle-eastern country since 1987. His father is a carpenter, but since his income was not sufficient to keep a family, his mother had to find a job in the Middle Eastern country as many Sri Lankan women in her position do.

Sugath’s first journey to Sri Pāda took place when he was an eight-year old child. It was a special journey that he made with his father because Sugath had to fulfil a vow that had been made on his behalf by his mother on a previous journey. The following is an account of his second journey in his own words:

“My second journey had taken place when I was preparing for my Ordinary Level examination. That was a completely different journey compared to my first one. We did not take that journey as a pilgrimage. It was like a picnic (*vinoda gamanak*). In the train we sang [sinhala pop] songs and teased our friends. Some time we did the same thing for the other groups, especially for girls who were travelling in the train. One girl in our group ‘set’ with another guy in a different group and we saw her again at the foothill just before we came home. In our group there were four girls, including my sister, and four boys. Except my sister, the other girls were my classmates. Two of them had brought their boyfriends. In addition to that, there was a newly married couple in their early twenties from our neighbourhood who also joined our

²⁸⁹ The name appearing in the case study has been changed. We interviewed him on 28th Nov. 2001.

journey to Sri Pāda. As soon as we arrived at Nallatanni we had a river bath as others' did. After that we all went to a temple and observed the five precepts and then proceeded to climbing the mountain. The couples began to climb on their own and I myself joined other youth groups and teased girls until we reached the temple. On one occasion, as a joke, a boy pulled a cap from a girl's head and ran away. But her boyfriend chased behind him and grabbed him and punched him several times on his face. At this point, several boys interfered and stopped further assault. I have seen such things on several occasions. They are not uncommon at Sri Pāda. After we reached the temple we worshipped the footprint and enjoyed the surrounding of the mountain for about ten or fifteen minutes and then began descending from the temple....".

Sugath's third journey to Sri Pāda took place just a few months prior to the start of his University education, one weekend in April 2000. At that time he was working at a well-known local NGO in his hometown, namely the *Sarvodaya*, where other members of the party had been working or taking part training programmes. A friend at Sarvodaya had suggested going on a trip (not the pilgrimage) to Sri Pāda for 'pleasure'.²⁹⁰ Let me quote in his words, "we all agreed on his suggestion to go to the Sri Pāda. In our group, there were eight boys and three girls, and all were between twenty and twenty-five. The girls were with their boyfriends, who were actually friends of mine at Sarvodaya. But the girls were not working at Sarvodaya, but were garment factory workers from the Ratmalana industrial zone. This time we did not take the train, instead we hired a 'van.' The driver of the mini bus is also a young guy who is probably our age and very much enjoyed the journey with us. I became aware later that all the girls in our group had gone to a temple on the eve of our journey to ensure our safety, but none of us follow such a ritual at all.

On our way to Sri Pāda, we stopped at Kitulgala (a popular river bathing place on the Colombo-Hatton road) and we had fun there bathing, drinking

²⁹⁰ What he exactly used is the term "*artha*". This word is commonly used among young people in Sri Lanka instead of '*vinodaya*' when they expect to have 'pleasure' or 'fun'.

(alcohol), eating, singing and dancing. The girls didn't take alcohol, but they enjoyed taking a river bath, singing and eating. Some boys were heavily drunk. Some of them took the naked photographs of them at right down the river. That we all did for fun. We very much enjoyed being at that bathing spot. We were not alone at that place: there were many groups like us enjoyed at this place. Some groups were playing loud music with musical instruments and enjoying themselves. After Kitulgala, we stopped drinking alcohol but carrying on singing until we reached Nallatanni. At there some had another bath, and some just washed their faces before we went to observe five precepts at a temple. As in my previous journey, the couples didn't accompany us but they climbed (*nāgga*) the mountain alone and we other climbed together, making jokes [through the friendly greetings and modified '*tunsarana*'] to girls in other ascending or descending groups. After we went to the temple, and as usual worshipped (*vānda*) the footprint and then went to the bell and tolled it. I tolled thrice because that was my third visit to Sri Pāda. One of my friends and a girl in our group made vows at the shrine of the deity Saman, but I was not sure whether other's had done the same things because I did not see them until I found them at the place for watching the sunrise. Unfortunately, we couldn't see the rising sun due to the cloudy sky and decided to come down. On our way back, no one had courage to make jokes or sing songs as we did during the climbing. We were so tired, exhausted, and finally came to the foothill after seven or eight hours of walking. Soon after our vehicle left Nallatanni, we began to drink alcohol (*arakku bonna patan gatta*) until we reached Kitulgala where we had made a stop on our way to Sri Pāda. There we had another bath and took our meal and rest for a while, then came back home late at night".

Finally, I asked Sugath, was there a special purpose for him in going to Sri Pāda? He replied "In the first two journeys, particularly in the first journey I went to Sri Pāda with great devotion (*bhaktiyen gēye*) and there was a bit fear in it (*bayakuth tībuna*), but now I don't have such a great devotion to Sri Pāda (the footprint), though as a Buddhist I worship it when I visit there, but my main purpose in visiting Sri Pāda enjoying (*vinoda venna*) with my friend". This is the particular voice of a so-called

'youth pilgrim,' who claims Sri Pāda journey as a 'pleasure trip', but if we closely look at his narration we can see that youth participation at Sri Pāda cannot be understood only by looking at the 'pleasure dimension' of their behaviour. Most of the youth whom I interviewed enthusiastically said that they enjoyed being at Sri Pāda in particular and the whole journey in general. These narrations are more or less similar to the second and the third journeys in Sugath's case. As the case shows, many come to Sri Pāda with friends mostly from neighbourhoods or workplaces, and sometimes with schoolmates or classmates. Many groups predominantly consist of young males but sometimes, there are sex mixed groups. However, it is hard to find separate youthful female groups at Sri Pāda. Basically, the young men more or less outnumber young females at Sri Pāda.

Among their pleasure activities, drinking alcohol, smoking, bathing, singing of modified '*tunsarana*' and local pop songs, dancing, and teasing girls, are much more commonly practised during the Sri Pāda pilgrimage. But as we see in the above narration some youths were serious enough to make vows at the temple and ensure the safety of their journey to Sri Pāda. Many youth groups observed the five precepts before the commencement of the climbing, and at the temple, it is clear they all worship the footprint (with or without great devotion to it). These are all common practices that each of pilgrims would perform once they come to the Sri Pāda temple and even they may go beyond such common practice by bringing their own problems to the temple's divine power for assistance. Many youths I spoke to tell me that when they come to the temple they wanted to stick to common religious practices, and for them anything like 'fun' would take place beyond the temple premises (sacred boundary). One of the members of a youth pilgrim group from Avissawella expressed this:

We came to Sri Pāda as Buddhists, we think that we would get a blessing (*asirvadaya*) by coming here. Hence, though we enjoyed ourselves on our way to Sri Pāda [temple] we never expecting to have a 'fun' at the temple.

This assertion might be partially true. But one must not forget the fact that disciplinary measures²⁹¹ have been taken by the temple authorities during the last decade or so in order to control what they called “disrespectful behaviour” of the pilgrims, particularly young ones at the temple. Though the “disrespectful behaviour” of pilgrims seems to be controlled on the temple premises, their attempt to control such behaviour beyond the temple territory seems to me not yet successful. In my view, this is partly because of the ambiguity of the ‘sacred’ and ‘secular’ boundaries at Sri Pāda. Though the sacred area of the Sri Pāda temple has reinforced, pilgrim awareness of the rule-bound nature of the sacred, unlike other national pilgrimage sites in Sri Lanka [such as Kandy, Anuradhapura and Kataragama] the exact sacred area at Sri Pāda is still unclear for many pilgrims. In other words unlike other national pilgrimage sites in the country, the sacred geography of Sri Pāda has not been clearly marked out yet. This is quite an interesting situation because almost all the national Buddhist pilgrimage sites in the country have already demarcated the sacred area from the secular area under the new ‘sacred geography’ constructing programme (*pūjā buhumi*) of the post-colonial Buddhist-propagating state. As Obeyesekere reports on the newly emerged sacred geography at Kataragama:

Thus in 1987 out of nowhere, it seems, a new impressive town emerged in Kataragama illustrating a new stage in the irrevocable embourgeoisment and politicization of Kataragama that has been going on for at least a decade. One can no longer talk of Kataragama as an isolated shrine in the forest as we did some years back. Kataragama for some time now is a modern pilgrimage center with hotels, rest houses for pilgrims, and a network of roads leading to it.....thanks to the Prime Minister [R. Premadasa], and with the new town there has emerged a new sacred geography constructed by government town planners and architects (1992: 220). Similarly, Nissan has reported the

²⁹¹ One such measure is the deployment of a considerable number of policemen both in uniform and civil to maintain the “conformity of the temple”. These were more particular about the youth (mis)behaviour at the temple premises; they are not allowed to wear head caps, or footwear, take photographs, make noises, music, eat etc. During my fieldwork a few drunken youthful pilgrims were taken into police custody. In addition to the temple’s police post there are five other police posts operating during the pilgrimage season to tackle the “misbehaviour” of the pilgrims and the illicit trading. According to a police report during the 2000/2001 pilgrimage season 205 liquor bottles belong to the pilgrims were taken into custody and 52 illegitimate liquor-selling spots and 16 ganja sellers were tracked down. Also, at the temple, an announcement was constantly made through a PA system on certain things that pilgrims should not do in the sacred area (*udamaluva*).

emergence of new "Sacred City" of Anuradhapura under each successive government of Sri Lanka (1985, 1988; see also Jeganathan 1995: 106-136).

The absence of such a new sacred geography at Sri Pāda further reveals the absence of the state and direct involvement of the bourgeoisie in the affairs of Sri Pāda. So Sri Pāda has escaped the relentless piety of the bourgeoisie for restoration and beautification. The vague sacred boundary that we see at the temple today, has been reinforced by the temple authorities in order to police within the temple premises. Under such policing technique we see some restrained behaviour from the youth. However, it is clear, away from that vague sacred domain not only youth pilgrims but also other pilgrim groups (e.g., Colombo pilgrims) behave differently. Hence, we can simply conclude that what youth pilgrims do on their journey to the Sri Pāda temple, is quite different from what they do at the temple. In a Turnerian view, both contexts provide what he calls "communitas," which involves for them an escape from "societas" or the world of normal society, 'a structured, differentiated and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation separating man in terms of "more" and "less"' (1969: 82).

My point here is that both religious attainment and non-religious experiences are equally important when understanding the pilgrim groups in general and youth groups in particular, at a religious site like Sri Pāda. Neither aspect of these sites, in Sri Lanka in particular, and South Asia in general, have been explored sufficiently by the anthropologists working in the region. My attempt in this specific section is to show some forms of 'secular' and 'sacred' activities of youth pilgrims who can be identified as a separate sociological category in the context of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage.

8.5 Conclusion

This Chapter explores, in general, some sociological backgrounds of the pilgrims, particularly their class affiliation, as demonstrated through their religiosity, occupational affiliation and the nature of their personal problems, and which shows that today most of the pilgrims coming to Sri Pāda belong to lower social classes. I make this claim against the backdrop of the analysis of Gananath Obeyesekere and

Bruce Kapferer. Obeyesekere has claimed that “people of all social classes and all nominal religious affiliations” (1988:163) visit Kataragama throughout the year. While Kapferer argues more specifically that “despite the disapproval of deity worship among certain fractions of the middle class, appeal to the deities is more apparent as a middle class practice than it is as a working class or peasant practice” (1983: 32). For him, there is a tendency for the middle class to focus on the Buddha and the deities to the exclusion of the lower reaches of the Sinhala Buddhist pantheon. Both Obeyesekere and Kapferer’s class analysis of Buddhist practices in postcolonial Sri Lanka cannot be substantiated by my findings at Sri Pāda. At Sri Pāda the presence of pilgrims from a “middle class” background is not a prominent sociological feature but this is not say that they are completely absent at the Sri Pāda. I show that some people from the lower middle-class occupations such as teachers, instructors and clerical workers, are present at Sri Pāda but their presence is extremely out-numbered by peasant and working class pilgrims.

Sri Pāda as a pilgrimage site for the lower class representation is further illustrated in a number of ways. Firstly, I have illustrated such class affiliation through the social background of the patrons of regular *pinkama* (merit making ceremony) at the Sri Pāda temple. Many *pinkama* patrons are far behind, in terms of their socio-economic background, to the middle class patrons of other major pilgrimage sites in the country. I clearly explain that unlike other major temples in Sri Lanka the organisation of the main *pinkamas* remains under the hands of people belonging to lower class social backgrounds. Secondly, there is the absence of a middle class oriented new sacred geography at Sri Pāda, which is visibly evident in other national pilgrimage sites where the character of the site is extremely dominated by political and middle class representation and patronage.

Finally, the class affiliation of the pilgrims is illustrated through the problems that they bring to Sri Pāda. I have shown that most involve issues related to people from a lower class background, particularly their personal or family crises, such as unemployment, illness, marriages and success of education. Moreover, I have explained some common practices among such lower social class people, such as taking revenge, or harming enemies through practicing sorcery, or performing curse-

removing rituals, entering into trance and possession by divine or demonic power are completely absent at the Sri Pāda temple. This is because, as I argued, the issues that they bring to the temple are strongly related to the central value of the temple, that is expressed through the notion of *karūṇava* (“compassion” or “kindness”).

In addition to class affiliation I have also demonstrated the regional and religious affiliations of the pilgrims. Unsurprisingly a large number of pilgrims to Sri Pāda are Buddhists, which further indicates the emergence of the Buddhist character of the pilgrimage site in the postcolonial politico-religious contexts. The regional affiliation I explored briefly in Chapter 6, and further developed in this Chapter through specific case of “Colombo pilgrims”. I have explained some unique features of this particular group especially the emergence of “new sponsors” for the pilgrims which origins in the deprived parts of the city of Colombo. I further show that, like “youth pilgrims”, the majority of “Colombo pilgrims” come to Sri Pāda to worship and to ask for help. Such “sacred” intentions are equally combined with the achievement of maximum pleasure. Both the pleasurable and the religious dimensions of these specific pilgrim groups have been explored through the accounts of personal experiences and memories of pilgrimages. This stresses that both religious attainment and non-religious experiences are equally important when understanding pilgrim groups in general, and youth groups in particular at a pilgrimage site like Sri Pāda. Also, different characteristics of the different pilgrims groups and individuals were discussed to show the essential heterogeneity of the pilgrims attending the pilgrimage site. This I introduce to avoid my analysis simply relying on class. That is why I have given particular attention to youth and Colombo pilgrims groups, and individuals in those groups, in doing so we hear much of their voices that cannot be surely heard in an analysis based solely on class.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

It is time to look back to consider the main features of the 'arduous journey' which we have travelled. As I mentioned at the beginning of the journey, this thesis is not only about pilgrimage, nor is it exclusively about the administration of the temple of Sri Pāda. Rather, it is a study in which pilgrims, monks and kings, and temple servants and administrators all come together as votaries of Sri Pāda, each with their own vision, construction and understanding, that inform their experiences of Sri Pāda. So, in the first three chapters I explore the major competing discourses that have arisen during its political and religious history and in the last three chapters I focus on the style of religiosity and the social composition of pilgrims, and explore social factors in the practices of worship.

Sri Pāda temple is situated on a peak of the wilderness mountain of the southwest edge of the central hill country of Sri Lanka which annually attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims mainly from the Buddhist majority in the island. Until recently, this site has been considered as an extraordinary place where ethnic and religious diversity in the country is being upheld. But today, as I have shown, Sri Pāda has been (re)ordered as a predominantly Buddhist site, and active participation of non-Buddhist groups is largely excluded. This ordering project(s) has been one of the main themes that I have examined in this work.

I have argued that, though Sri Pāda has been in the human mind, at least, since the sixth century A.D. (at the time of great chronicle, Mahavamsa was written), it became a place of pilgrimage that had been recognised and patronised by the state only after the 11th century A.D. Since then as I have clearly shown throughout this work different influential actors, for example; kings, monks, Hindu priests, aristocratic and colonial officers, took Sri Pāda affairs seriously under the different socio-political conditions of the country. In a broader sense, I show how differently Sri Pāda was ordered and reordered, or made and remade throughout its long history in the sense of its administration and religiosity, and argue that the Sri Pāda temple that we see today was coming into view from the mid 1950's alongside the emergence of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in the country. In other words, the

administrative, architectural and the 'official religiosity' that we see today at the Sri Pāda temple began to be viewed under the 'reordering project' of the self-motivated monk, Morontuduve Dhammānanda (1890-1970) who was quite influenced by the emerging Sinhala Buddhist nationalist project. To be precise Dhammānanda became a key figure in formulating a new version of Buddhist Sri Pāda and his successors have done the rest, by bringing their own modifications into the new structure. The Sri Pāda that was created in the decades after Independence does not represent a return to any original condition that it inherits. Rather, it was a new creation – a predominantly Buddhist space – a very concrete manifestation of current ideas of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism. Like Kataragama, the strong Buddhist element at today's Sri Pāda continues to grow. Hence, we don't see a sacred site where diverse non-Buddhist religious practices are being publicly held and openly accommodated. Instead we see a highly Buddhicized sacred space in which the large numbers of diverse Buddhist pilgrim groups have conflicting notions, and express their Buddhist identity in different ways. By the 1950's onwards Sri Pāda temple had become a 'sacred site' and almost exclusively for Sinhala Buddhist practices. Hence, we can conclude that the historical situation of a site of plural worship has now been constructed or ordered as a predominantly Buddhist site.

Both Nissan and Kemper argue that the identification and 'renovation' of relics and sacred places is an expression of nationalist consciousness²⁹², and their observation is quite true for Sri Pāda. But what is not true is that such '(re)ordering' has been taking place, which compares to other 'national' sacred sites in the country, under the minimal intervention of (postcolonial) state (and not forgetting that it had been the very important site for all the centres of powers in the pre-colonial polity in the island). I have argued that the Buddhicization of Sri Pāda is entirely an act of Sinhala Buddhist nationalist actor(s) or agencies (like Dhammānanda). So, we can draw a major conclusion that the (national) sacred sites can be (re) ordered or (re) constructed in a context of growing ethnic/religious nationalism without much intervention of the state. My conclusion differs somewhat from the argument made in

²⁹² Jeganathan point is also equally valid here: he argues how Anuradhapura being ordered (both discursive and non-discursive manner) as authoritative (nationalised) religious site in (post) colonial Sri Lanka (1995:104-136).

the recent anthropological studies of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism (e.g., Spencer 1990b). These studies (e.g., Brow 1990; Woost 1990) have quite convincingly shown the hegemonic politics of the (postcolonial) state in the propagating Sinhala Buddhist nationalism even in areas (e.g., Vāddā villages, grass roots development programme, village temple ritual or 'ritual of unity') far from the centre of power. Much of the emphasis is given in these studies to the role of the state (structure) in the activities associated with nationalism. Thus they have failed to understand contexts in which nationalist agenda can be played out without much involvement of the state apparatus. In other words, they haven't paid much attention to the crucial role that particular actors or agency can play in such a process.

This project is structured by blending histories of the governance of the temple and ethnography of the aspirations of the devotee or pilgrims, I attempt to break down the boundaries of the anthropology of pilgrimage, questioning the dubious division between structure (e.g., Turnerian view), and process (e.g., Competing discourse), religion and politics, and this and other worldly formulation. These dominant views in the anthropology of pilgrimage are tested in my thesis particularly in relation to the pilgrimage centre and the pilgrims journeying to it. My findings suggest that it is hard to grasp an overall picture about the pilgrimage site, as well as the journey to it if too much emphasis is placed on either theoretical perspective. However, the ethnographic and historical material that I have presented in this project owes more credit to the theory of the competing discourse of Eade and Sallnow (1991) (the history of Sri Pāda provides numerous examples for their claim) than the Turnerian approach. According to the received wisdom in the Turnerian view 'communitas' can occur, as far as pilgrimage is concerned, in the highly structured agrarian societies. But I have shown that such an approach can be useful, with some qualifications, in understanding (post) modern phenomena like youth pilgrimage. Unlike other pilgrim groups, youth groups have shown a sense of ('communitas') solidarity and friendships with enthusiastic engagement in singing, dancing, joking etc. during the journey. Even among 'Colombo pilgrims', the significant process of social engagement and integration is quite apparent. The emergence of a 'new pleasure sphere' and social activities within these two groups is further support for

the Turnerian view. Unlike these groups, the 'traditional' pilgrim groups are basically arranged in rigid hierarchal manner, albeit that their formation is completely different from the everyday social order. And basically, such groups are subjected to the authority of a group leader called *nadegura*. Although the authority of *nadegura* has been challenged by the new group leaders such as female *nadegura*, 'managers' of youth groups and 'leaders' of Colombo pilgrims, they still manage to maintain their authority over pilgrim groups by adjusting into new socio-economic conditions of the country. So such traditional arrangement does not mesh with Turnerian notions of 'communitas'. The pilgrim's behaviour at Sri Pāda shows us that pilgrimage may involve consensus and communitas, but at the same time it also involves divisiveness and discord. By considering the above facts we can conclude that both approaches (Turnerian and the 'competing discourse'), with some qualifications, are useful for our understanding of pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. If we need to seek a new approach, as Simon Coleman (2002) suggests, the anthropology of pilgrimage should move from this theoretical deadlock. I have quite clearly demonstrated that such an attempt would not be difficult if we treat 'pilgrimage' as a case-study for understanding human behaviour, rather than focussing on it as an institution, or firmly bounded category of action.

Apart from this theoretical modification, I have also shown how ethnographers can create meaningful collaborations between anthropology and history when studying universal phenomena like pilgrimage. The ongoing debates and discussions in ethnography are directed toward indicating the mood of questioning and introspection that encompasses the discipline. This questioning has led ethnographers to acknowledge not only their own 'subjectivity' but also the larger limitations of fieldwork. One of the ways to overcome such limitations has been the ethnographers' effort to relate their experiences in the field with the reading of texts and archives. This effort, as Bernard S. Cohn suggested, pushes anthropology 'from the objectification of social life to a study of its constitution and construction' (1980: 217). By blending 'ethnography' with 'history' I have been able to uncover the processes in which Sri Pāda has been politically and religiously constituted and constructed rather (re) ordered. I must note here that given the space for this work the

large body of rich archival materials, that I have collected on the subject, could not be included in the main text. I have, however, included some of the material as appendices.

Moving from theoretical and methodological suggestions I am quite interested to draw out another major conclusion: unlike other major pilgrimage sites, today most of the pilgrims coming to Sri Pāda belong to lower social classes. I make this claim against the backdrop of the analysis of Gananath Obeyesekere and Bruce Kapferer. Both Obeyesekere and Kapferer's class analysis of Buddhist practices in postcolonial Sri Lanka cannot be substantiated by my findings at Sri Pāda. At Sri Pāda the presence of pilgrims from a "middle class" background is not a prominent sociological feature but this is not to say that they are completely absent at the site. I show that some people from the lower middle-class occupations such as teachers, instructors and clerical workers, are present but their presence is heavily outnumbered by peasant and working class pilgrims.

I make this conclusion by closely examining their socio-economic backgrounds, the nature of the problems that they bring to Sri Pāda to seek help from the divine figures, as well as the kind of religiosity that they express at Sri Pāda. For example I have clearly shown that unlike other major temples in Sri Lanka the patrons of the regular *pinkamas* at Sri Pāda remain under the hands of people belonging to lower class social backgrounds. The absence of a middle class oriented new sacred geography at Sri Pāda, which is visibly evident in other national pilgrimage sites where the character of the site is extremely dominated by political and middle class representation and patronage, is further evidence for my claim. Moreover, most of the issues that they bring to Sri Pāda related to their personal or family crises, such as unemployment, illness, marriages and success of education clearly depicted their social backgrounds. Also, quite interestingly, some of the common ritual practices that have been characterised by ethnographers among people from lower social classes, such as taking revenge, or harming enemies through practicing sorcery, or performing curse-removing rituals, entering into trance and possession by divine or demonic power are completely absent at the Sri Pāda temple. This suggests that the

religiosity of peasants and working class people is much more complex than some ethnographers have thought of so far.

Today's Sri Pāda is, as I have concluded before, almost exclusively for Sinhala Buddhist practices. But those popular Buddhist practices at Sri Pāda itself began to change in response to changes in society at large. Today people don't come to Sri Pāda only for merit making, although the journey to Sri Pāda itself was designated in the past as a 'merit making journey' (*pin gamana*), many pilgrims come to Sri Pāda today to gain help (*pihita*) from the 'sacred footprint' and the guardian deity Saman in regard to 'this-worldly' benefits rather than 'other-worldly' ones. It doesn't mean that people don't engage in merit making activities at Sri Pāda but my point here is that there are no clear cut activities as such among pilgrims at Sri Pāda because merit making activities are equally emphasised to achieve the other worldly as well as this-worldly goals. For example, organising *pinkama* at Sri Pāda need not be just for the merit that brings rewards in future lives. It is hoped that the meritorious behaviour of the organisers may also bring the benefits for 'this worldly' concerns: a healthy life without undue suffering from which one may progress towards the goal of enlightenment. Similarly, *pinkamas* are widely used for seeking a general blessing or protection, from the 'forces' which are beyond individual control. Broadly speaking, many religious activities at today's Sri Pāda go beyond the simple objective of 'merit making'. So, this suggests pilgrimage to today's Sri Pāda equally emphasises both, what anthropologist Alan Morinis called, 'devotional' and 'instrumental' elements (1992:10-11).

Though many come to gain both 'instrumental' and 'devotional' benefits, a sizeable proportion of those who come to Sri Pāda are not all that interested in religion. Admittedly they may worship the sacred footprint, and deity Saman, but on their own admission they are there for pleasure (*vinode*) rather than because of any great devotion to the sacred footprint or the deity Saman. In this regard, some youth groups are exceptional. So, this leads us/me to conclude that a journey to Sri Pāda today is much more than a religious journey. Even though pilgrims come to Sri Pāda for secular as well as religious reasons, its 'sacred' meanings tend to predominate.

The popularity of private religious practices, such as making vows and wishes, grievance notes and private donation at Sri Pāda further reanimated its' sacred potency; of Buddha and its' guardian deity Saman.

The sacred potency at Sri Pāda is largely credited with a more general one, often undefined. So this has created an ambiguous situation there. As with the Bo Tree temple in Anuradhapura, as Nissan (1985) explains, there is no clear-cut distinction between the Buddha and the God; or to put it another way, the distinction between the 'other-worldly' and the 'this -worldly', is not maintained. Like at the deity shrine, people bring their 'this worldly matters' to the footprint shrine where its benevolent power can be tapped through worship oriented towards the Buddha. This is in stark contrast to conventional anthropological understanding of Sinhala Buddhist practices which stresses that worldly benefits can be attained by the propitiation of gods and other supernatural beings, but asking such favours directly from the Buddha is most uncommon if not altogether nonexistent (e.g., Obeyesekere 1963,1966; Ames 1964, 1966; Yalman 1962; Gombrich and Obeyesekere 1988). They might be right, because such practices wouldn't be possible before ordinary Buddha statues in ordinary temples. But a picture at the 'national sacred sites', where relics of Buddha are venerated as his living presence is quite different from those of ordinary temples. The veneration of major relics is said to be equivalent to the veneration of the Buddha himself. Therefore, places of major relics are known to be popular places of worship or major pilgrimage sites in the Buddhist world. The relics are known to be powerful throughout Buddhist history, and are usually associated with kings or rulers. Visits are accompanied by a wide range of offerings and obeisance, activities that both reflect and construct a felt sense of the Buddha's authoritative presence in the circumstances of Buddhists' lives (Trainor 1997: 188).

Sri Pāda is one such place, where the power of Buddha is present through his relics (the footprint). People believe that power can be tapped through a range of offerings, activities and pleas that they make at the temple on worldly as well as other-worldly matters. So, the types of religious behaviour at Sri Pāda have further complicated, the conventional anthropological understanding of "this" and "other" worldly syndrome.

This dominant Weberian anthropological discourse is inadequate for understanding not only the role of the Buddha but also role of gods like Saman in the contemporary Sri Lanka. For them, the god Saman is now disfavoured by the people because of the lack of their involvement in the mundane world. The material I have presented in Chapter 7 doesn't corroborate that view. The popularity of Saman at Sri Pāda, and at other major shrines dedicated to him in the country, is clearly indicated that not only his continues involvement in the mundane matters but also began to view him as the god of 'Sinhala Buddhist nation'.

It is clear that the style of dichotomous reasoning that I regard to be a critical feature of the conventional theoretical formulation on popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka is not helpful to us in understanding religious practices and their meanings at Sri Pāda. What I try to do in this project, without becoming trapped by the hegemonic theoretical formulation on popular Buddhism in Sri Lanka, is to consider what Buddhism is, the kinds of social and political projects into which the figures of the Buddhist tradition get mobilized, and to leave Buddhists to define Buddhism. This is the kind of anthropological perspective being demanded by recent scholars on the anthropology of Buddhism in Sri Lanka.

On a small scale, this work will fill a striking lacuna in the regional literature, because, apart from brief mentions in passing (e.g. Gombrich 1971, Spencer 1990d), the Sri Pāda pilgrimage remains ethnographically almost completely undocumented. At the broadest thematic level this work provides a new addition to the vastly growing body of anthropological literature on the relationship between Buddhism and Sinhala national identity in particular (e.g., Obeyesekere 1972, 1996; Tambiah 1986, 1992; Spencer 1990b, Scott 1994) and pilgrimage studies in general (e.g., Turner 1974, 1978; Eade & Sallnow 1991).

Appendix I

Buddhist Narrativizations on Sri Pāda

The Buddhist claim on Sri Pāda is based on two different mytho-historical narratives: the most important one is the origin myth of Sri Pāda in which the Buddha visited the island and implanted his left foot on the mount of Samanala, which later became 'Sri Pāda'. The origin myth first appeared in *Mahavamsa* as written by the scholarly monk, Mahanama, in the 6th century, CE and later appeared in other Buddhist chronicles in somewhat different and extensive forms. The *Mahavamsa*, referred to as Sri Lanka's 'national chronicle,' was widely used and served as the principle literary source for the historical reconstruction of ancient Sri Lanka²⁹³. It provides a brief account of the Buddha's visit to Sri Pāda:

[H]is (Buddha) third visit eight years after his enlighten, was to Kelaniya (near Colombo). The Buddha [Master], set forth surrounded by five hundred bhikkus, on the second day of the beautiful month of Vesak (May), went to the Kalyani country, the habitation of Maniakkhika, the snake king of Kelaniya. The naga-king, with his following, served food to the Conqueror [Buddha] and his followers. The Teacher [Buddha] preached the doctrine there, he rose, and went to the Sumanakuta where he left traces of his footprint plain to see on Sumanakuta (Sri Pāda or Adam's Peak). He rested while in a cave under the Sumanakuta, Divaguha. From there he went to Digavapi on the east coast, and to various places in Anuradhapura, returned thence to Jetavana (in India) (Mv.1.77-78).

Powerfully represented in the scholarly or chronicle traditions in the island, this myth eventually gave unprecedented authority to the Buddhist claim on Sri Pāda. The second myth is about the discovery of Sri Pāda by a ruler of the country. It happened, according to the myth, during the regime of King Nissankamalla, who ruled the

²⁹³ The historicity of the chronicles was debated, but the *Mahavamsa* became a critical text in investigating the early history and archaeology of the island upon which Positivists historians, nationalists of Sri Lanka have relied. According to Walters both the *Mahavamsa* and *Dipavamsa* are thought to be based on an earlier text, the *Buddhavamsa* ("Successive Lives of the Buddhas"), written in India during the second or first century BCE (see Walters 1997: 160-92 and 2000: 101)

kingdom of Pollonaruva between 1187 and 1196. Interestingly, unlike the origin myth of Sri Pāda, the discovery myth is visibly absent from the Buddhist chronicle traditions. Instead it has been widely popular in non-canonical traditions such as oral and other forms of 'folk literature' or 'intermediate text'. But as we shall see shortly, the origin myth of Sri Pāda can be easily found in the non-chronicle or 'intermediate texts', albeit in different forms and narrative structures.

There is no single fixed version of the origin of Sri Pāda. Versions vary in detail and emphasis, although the broad outline remains the same as the account of the Mahavamsa. According to Obeyesekere, the significance of the myth in the Mahavamsa is clear: the island has been consecrated by the Buddha himself, and 'malevolent' forces have been banished, subjugated or converted into Buddhism (1995: 224). Like Obeyesekere, most scholars take the Mahavamsa account of the 'establishment' of Buddhism by the Buddha himself as providing Buddhists with a historical claim of heir Buddhist identity and their 'authority' over the sacred sites and the non-Buddhists of the island. This interpretation is both debated and well accepted among various schools of Sri Lankan studies. *But what is important to me about the Mahavamsa narrative is that Sri Pāda was in the human consciousness in the 6th century CE*²⁹⁴. But also important is that, for the [author of Mahavamsa] chroniclers, Sri Pāda was not a place where ordinary people visit and worship, but where 'miraculous things' occur.

The first notable post-canonical Pali literary production which gave a more elaborate version of the mythic origin of Buddhist Sri Pāda was written in the thirteenth century, popularly known as Samantakutavanna, (lit.the Praise of Mount Samanta), or the Praise of the abode of Saman, the guardian deity of Sri Pāda²⁹⁵. This elaborate

²⁹⁵ Different scholars date the poem differently: Malalasekara, G.P (1928: 129) places the poem in the 13th century, while Paranavitana suggests the 11th or 12th (1958: 15) and A.D.S Konow suggests the beginning of the 14th century and argues that the text was written under the regime of Parakramabahu II (1236-1271). The poem was published for the first time in the Sinhala language in 1890, edited by Valane Dhammananada and was reprinted in 1910. In 1959 Kirielle Nanavimala edited it, C.E.Godakumbura edited in 1958 and published under the Pali Text Society London (see: Hazlewood: 1986)

poetic text was composed nearly nine hundred years after the first mythical story appeared in the Mahavamsa, and in under just two centuries after the state began to patronise the pilgrimage site. The Samantakutavanna provides full poetic descriptions of the Buddha's visit to Sri Pāda and the implant of his footprint there (see Godakumbura 1958). The Sinhala language *Pūjāvaliya* (The Garland of Offerings), composed in the same century, gives a comprehensive account on the Buddha's visit to Sri Pāda in its' 33rd chapter²⁹⁶. The author of the *Pūjāvaliya* claimed that Sri Pāda was not only sanctified by Gautama Buddha, but also by the three other previous Buddhas as well. Moreover, he tells how Buddha had implanted his footprint at Sri Pāda but also at three other different places beyond Sri Lanka: the Narmada river bank [in the city of Savat] in India, the Mount of Sachchabaddha²⁹⁷ ... and the beach in the country of Yonaka....²⁹⁸ (lit. Muslim).

These events were elaborated into colourful, unreal and grandiose events in the text. There is no doubt the author of the *Pūjāvaliya* derived the main story—and the style of the presentation—from the Pali poem of Samantakutavanna, and further elaborated it by adding imaginary elements around the authoritative mythical narrative of the origin of Sri Pāda. Michael Roberts reports that this was the general pattern in the literature of medieval Sri Lanka (2002: 11). However, the story of the *Pūjāvaliya* marked the textualization of the story of the Buddha's visit to Sri Pāda in the vernacular language and thereby groups of both literate and non-literate persons were enabled to read or listen to recitals of such stories about Buddha's presence on their island. Some scholars have pointed out localization of Buddhist historiography is consistent with broader literary trends emphasizing Sinhala language and audiences, beginning in the twelfth century onwards (e.g, Godakumbura 1955,

²⁹⁶ *Pujavaliya* was composed in the Sinhala vernacular by a Buddhist monk, Mayurapada, in (1266) and it was later edited by several scholars; Gunasekara, (1893), Ñānavimala (1986), Suraveera, (1970). Here I use Kirielle Ñānavimala, ed., *Pujavaliya* (Colombo: Gunasena, 1986) Ch.33.

²⁹⁷ The geographical place in the text is unknown but there are different views- most of the Buddhists whom I spoke said blindly that it is in South India but some claim its in Thailand.

²⁹⁸ This is interesting because some Buddhists claim that Muslims have been worshiping the Buddha's foot print at Mecca, which he had imprinted on the beach in his visit to Yonakapura or city of Mecca. The idea of Buddha's visit to Yonakapura is evident from this period.

Hallisey 2003, Berkwitz 2004). In addition to this literary shift, in his earlier work Hallisey shows that works written between the eighth and thirteenth centuries visibly promoted lay and monastic expressions of devotion (1988).

Hallisey's point can be further elaborated through the story of origin of Buddhist Sri Pāda, and appears in the sixteenth century literary work, known as *Rājaratnakara*. The author of this text is unknown—though probably a monk—but it gives a fascinating account of the Buddha's visit to Sri Pāda with a highly devotional tone²⁹⁹. In this version Sri Pāda mountain is described as a 'woman' who urges Buddha to visit her place and imprint his beautiful foot on her body (see Upham 1833)³⁰⁰. The feminisation of Sri Pāda as a site of worship shows the emerging devotional aspect of the Sri Pāda pilgrimage in this historical period, and such forms of devotional expression are in other vernacular literary productions that are directly connected to Sri Pāda. For example, *Saman Sirita*, or 'The Song of Praise to God Saman', was published in the 16th century, and describes an occasion when the God Saman asked Buddha to imprint his footprint on the mountain and in making this request, describes the extreme charm and grandeur of the area surrounding the peak. This example shows that devotional literary productions on Sri Pāda from this period were not only directed to Buddha but also to the god Saman, the guardian deity of Sri Pāda. As I explained in chapter 6, this style of devotional literature has a clear connection with the devotional acts of worship of ordinary pilgrims; for example, devotional songs (*tunsarana*) sung during the pilgrimage can be seen as a part of the continuation of this tradition.

Likewise, the Buddhists' origin myth of Sri Pāda was so absolutely taken as real history by post-canonical literary scholars that they attempted to reify myth as history in their literary production. This historicized origin myth of Sri Pāda has become a popular narrative of Sinhala Buddhists, as it genuinely occurred at Sri Pāda. In fact, today this narrative is retold in teaching, preaching and the printing medium

²⁹⁹ Here I use *Rajaratnakara* edited by Edward Upham, 1833, London: Parlury Allen & Co.

³⁰⁰ This observation was made to me by Charles Hallisey.

with different flavours and colours, as well as being depicted in the temple murals³⁰¹. Such narrativization has produced authoritative claim on Sri Pāda as the Buddhist place of worship. Let me relay some of such narratives here.

These narratives of origination in Sri Pāda that we shall hear in a moment differ from the stories already heard. Such differences lie in their narrative structure and the amount of information produced through those narrations. Yet, such stories seem to be not completely constructed without the influence of the story narrated in the chronicles. Sometimes, it may be the opposition, and that is what Young and Senanayaka remind us of, that some forms of literature “emerged from a corpus of oral traditions” (1999: 7 cf. Roberts 2002: 10). Let me first begin with one such oral story that was narrated to me by an old villager, Karthinis,³⁰² (81) of Palabaddala. This story, recounted below, was situated in the mythical context of Buddha’s third visit to Kelaniya and then to Sri Pāda where he implanted the sacred footprint:

The Buddha came to Kelaniya with the invitation of Naga king (*ñā rajjuruvange aradhanāva*). At that time, this territory (*samanala adaviya*) was under the authority of the God Saman (*Saman devi hamuduruvo*). Upon hearing Buddha’s visit to Kelaniya he went to see Buddha there. God Saman was known to Buddha (*dēnagena hitiya*) because Buddha met him in his first visit at Mahiyangana. Having seen Buddha, God Saman invited (*aradhanā kala*) him to visit his territory (*adaviya*) and beg him to imprint his foot there. Buddha accepted the invitation (*aradhanāva piligatta*) and came to the top of the mountain of the tertiary of the God Saman. At that point god Saman was pointed a beautiful rock to imprint his foot mark (*siri pathula*) but the rock was polluted by a death body of a snake (*gārāndi kunak*) hence this rock called “*Kunudiya Parvata*³⁰³” (lit. the rock of polluted water).

³⁰¹ For example in Sinhala school text books. I have also seen this story as beautifully painted on the temple’s walls of Kelaniya and Mahiyangana and in a number of local temples in Ratnapura area.

³⁰² This village is the last one populated on the path of the southern entrance to Sri Pāda from Ratnapura’s side. Karthinis is one of the oldest villagers in Palabaddala, a father of five children who is running a family business in order to provide accommodation for the pilgrims in his own house. In addition to that, he runs a small boutique for the pilgrims and the fellow villagers.

³⁰³ This rock is situated on the western side of the Sri Pāda mountain.

At that point God Saman suggested to the Buddha to visit to the next mountain, the Mount of Saman (*Samanala kanda*). Having come to the peak of the mount Saman³⁰⁴[Buddha asked God Saman] “How do worshippers come to this place if I placed my foot-print on such a difficult place?”

[The God Saman replied] “I promised you that I will help (*pihita*) them and protect (*araksha*) and bring them here like a piece of cotton (*pulun rodak*) and send them back as they climbed”

Then Buddha agreed to put his foot-print there (*kāmathi una*).

At that point the ‘Vasavarti Maraya’³⁰⁵(the arch enemy of the Buddha) came with terrified blowing wind (*bahayanaka hulagak mavagena avā*) to obstruct the event (*bāda karanna*).

Then the Buddha’s power of resolved (*adhisthana sakthiya*) could stop the blowing wind.

Again he (Mara) came with the heavy torrential rain (*murugasan vāssak*) with a horrified thunderstorm. It also defeated by the Buddha’s power of resolved and he imprinted his left foot (*vam padaya*) on the rock (*gala uda*).

Unexpectedly Mara reappeared himself and upturned the rock (*gala anik pātta peraluva*) which Buddha imprint his foot. At that point [the Buddha thought to show his power] He stood up in the air for a while and walk here and there (*sakmankalā*). The power of the Buddha’s action (*anubhavayen*) the Mara was defeated and ran away (*palāgiya*).

Then god Saman brought a priceless (*mēlakala nohāki*) huge blue sapphire gem (*loku nil mānikak*) and begged Buddha to mark his foot-print on it for the homage (*vadinna-pudanna*).

The narrator said that “we don’t see that foot mark (*siri patula*) today, it was well protected by the king Nissankka by putting a huge rock top on it”. “Today we see the facsimile mark (*anu ruvak*) that was made by the King”.

³⁰⁴ The word can also mean ‘butterflies’ in the Sinhala language.

³⁰⁵ Mara is a very common character in the Buddhist literatures where he always obstructively appears in the most important events in the Buddha’s life e.g. At the point of Buddha attaining Nirvana, Mara was trying to obstruct it (see: story of defeats Mara in Gombrich 1971: 56-57).

“The actual foot-print is under the twenty seven feet depth (*daha ata riyank yata*)”.

The narrative enacts a popular version of the Sinhala story about the Buddha’s visit to Sri Pāda and the indentation of the Buddha’s footprint at the request by the God Saman. The power and the virtue of the Buddha are always clearly represented in this popular narrative as in other textual narratives. But, noticeably, it is narrated through a very different strategy of representation. For example, the narratives appeared in the textual forms unstated events like: Buddha’s visiting to the neighbouring rock (*kunudiya parvataya*) and the imprinting of the footprint on a priceless gem and the Buddha’s inquiry about the difficulty of the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda. Such narrative structures rarely appear in the stories found in the chronicles. Nevertheless, such oral narrations of Sri Pāda’s originating story now have shifted into another medium of narration: printed pilgrim’s pamphlets.

With the advent of ‘print capitalism’ on the island, a similar kind of oral narrative was now being transformed into readable pamphlets. The voluminous print pamphlets or ‘folk literature’—what I call collectively “subaltern pilgrim’s literature”—can be found on Sri Pāda today³⁰⁶. This literature is now widely available and simply written in everyday language rather than a classical literary style, mainly in poetic form by non-elitist composers, such as leaders of pilgrim’s groups (*nadegura*), non-scholarly monks and other ordinary laity (*upāsaka*) and unknown authors. However, finding such literatures produced by women composers is hard. Interestingly, they were composed on a number of different themes (e.g. One such pamphlet was titled as ‘*apē palamuvana Samanala gamana*’ ‘Our first pilgrimage to Sri Pāda’) and were written or published not for monetary value but as a meritorious act. Let me summarise some of the content of the origin story of Sri Pāda that appeared in the two examples of subaltern pilgrim’s literature here. The first pamphlet, entitled ‘*Samanala Vistaraya*’ (lit. the Description of Samanala), was written by Semba Kutti Kulasekere Appu in 1894. The second one is ‘*Sri Pāda*

³⁰⁶ To see these literatures on Sri Pāda; Sinhalese pamphlets collection of Colombo National Museum (SP104-A-Z). And also see H. Nevill (1956) *Sinhala Kavi* (vol. I, II and III). Some of them are still available during the pilgrimage season

gaman vistaraya’ (lit. the description of Sri Pāda journey) and was composed and published in 1923 by Kandage Hayalage Juwanis. The first one contains only twenty-seven verses but the second has one hundred and twenty-seven verses, 23 of which were dedicated to describing the event of implanting Buddha’s footprint at Sri Pāda. A similar story is in *Samanala Vistaraya* and it gave a description of the Buddha’s journey (by foot) to Sri Pāda through the southern pilgrimage (Ratnapura) path. In that journey, as the pamphlet describes, Buddha had faced several difficulties, like an ordinary pilgrim (for example, at one point the robe of the Buddha was torn and he stitched it himself) but finally he overcame those difficulties by the virtue of his ‘power’ and implanted the footprint at Sri Pāda. The second pamphlet, *Sri Pāda gaman vistaraya* gives us a vivid poetic description of situating the footprint at Sri Pāda. According to that description Buddha implanted his footprint at an auspicious time on a fabulous gem (blue sapphire “*indu nil mānika*”), which was offered to him by the God Saman. Those poetic descriptions are highly devotional in their nature yet oriented to Buddha and the guardian deity Saman. Let me quote one such devotional poetic description on the event of Buddha implanting his footprint:

Pata lan sē kota mudunata vāda la
Eta van se buduguna angava la
Kota pita maluve sakman kara la
Kota pita muni siripada taba oba la

[Buddha had visited to the mountain summit, and he attested the power of his virtue, then walked serenely back and forth (*sakman*) on the summit and finally, implanted his footprint].

In such poetic descriptions about the origin of Buddhist Sri Pāda, the Buddha’s journey was depicted in relation to his power and virtue as we see in the oral narration. The power and individual qualities of Buddha are explicitly and devotionally emphasised to give the site its sacred character. Many stories illustrate this claim of superiority of the Buddha and the place he visited on the island. However, at the same time the Buddha is also depicted as an ordinary pilgrim who has undertaken the long, arduous journey to the mountain’s top by foot, not ‘over air’

as the chroniclers have described. This contrasting feature of the pilgrim-poets' narrations is visibly absent in the chroniclers' narration on the origin myth. The ordinary pilgrim-poets viewed the Buddha's journey to Sri Pāda—or more precisely the origin of Sri Pāda as the Buddhist sacred site—through a different framework of narration, casting it in a different flavour with the form of a simple narrative structure.

These narratives give us a different picture of originating Buddhist Sri Pāda. The narratives are not produced by the “historian of the state”, but instead were made, remade and narrated by the “subjugated knowledge” producers or subalterns. Similar stories were constructed around the first human occupation or (re) discovering of Sri Pāda by humans, more precisely ordinary people, and such stories were visibly absent in the narrative constructed by the “historian of the state”. These stories narrate how Sri Pāda turned from a place for divine worship into a place for human worship. In other words, how it transformed divine occupation into human occupation.

Unorthodox stories about the (Re) discovering Sri Pāda

Like the origin stories of Sri Pāda, I gathered these narratives from two distinct sources, mainly through the popular local oral histories circulated in and around Sri Pāda and the stories published in what I called “subaltern pilgrims literature” about Sri Pāda. Generally, these narratives relate to the (re)discovering or (re)inventing of Sri Pāda by the extraordinary kings, or simply by the ordinary people. One of the most popular stories revealed that the king Nissankamalla (1187-1196), who ruled the kingdom of Polonnaruva, was the first king³⁰⁷ who (re)discovered Sri Pāda. But according to the author of the great chronicle, Mahavamsa, the first king who occupied Sri Pāda was Vijayabahu I (1070-1110), who ruled the Polonnaruva long before the Nissankamalla's regime. So, the story of discovering Sri Pāda by king

³⁰⁷ A villager of Palabaddala told me that Sri Pāda was discovered not by the king of Nissankamalla who ruled in Polonnaruva, but by the regional king named Nissanka of Sabaragamuva. However, I could not find substantial information to support his claim.

Nissankamalla is totally absent in the chroniclers' narratives. But the popular narrative of (re)discovering Sri Pāda does not give credit to king Vijayabahu I, instead hailing Nissankamalla as the first king who discovered and made Sri Pāda a site of worship for humans.

However, there are other popular stories related to other kings, such as Valagambahu (88-76 AD)³⁰⁸ and Bhatiya (143-167 A.D), who in the narration was the first king to discover Sri Pāda. But compared to the story of Nissankamalla, these stories are not as popular among the Buddhist pilgrims to today's Sri Pāda. Interestingly, though the story of Nissankamalla contained a similar structure, it has been cast differently by many people³⁰⁹. Hence, let me present here one version of this popular story, which was narrated to me by Karthinis, (81) a villager³¹⁰ of a foothill village of Sri Pāda called Palabaddala:

In Polonnaruwa there lived a popular king called Nissankamalla and he had gardens (*uyan-wattu*) and flower gardens (*mal wattu*) in the almost every part of the island (*rate sāma tānāma tibuna*). The King also had a beautiful flower garden in the area of Gilimalaya³¹¹ at the place called *Samanwatta* (the garden of jasmine) [the story teller pointed out that the people in the area still call this place as "*Samanwatta*"³¹²]. As a habit, the king was used to go to the garden in the every morning and plucked flowers and offered them to the near by temple. One day he found that some one being steals flower from the garden. The king sent a drummer with a message [order] (*ana berayak*) "the

³⁰⁸ William Skeen has documented this story (1871: 16-17) but that story is not so popular among the pilgrims of today's Sri Pāda.

³⁰⁹ In the 1970's and 1980's there were two Sinhala films made out of this story, namely "The territory of the God" (*Deviyange Rate*), and "The Sacred Footprint" (*Siri Patula*). More recently this story is being transformed into modern popular cassettes in the form of poetic preaching (*kavi bana*) by an ex-monk, Alavature Vijith.

³¹⁰ Markus Aksland has also documented the similar story but it is being cast differently (see 1990: 86-87).

³¹¹ Gilimalaya was a royal land that was offered by Vijiyabahu I to provide certain services to pilgrims who climbed Sri Pāda from the Southern direction.

³¹² The other day I happened to be at this place, but there was nothing important left but I saw the place is being covered by the tea plantation

person who could catch the stealer would be rewarded with an elephant sized load of valuable things (*ētek barata vastuva*)". At this point, a cripple man (*kotek*) came forward and stops the drummer and insisted to try his luck...

Now the story diverted into how this man became crippled: once there was two brothers living happily near a village. With the consent of their parent younger one became a monk in the village temple. Unexpectedly, their parent died and the elder brother got married to a beautiful woman. This woman fell in love with the monk and wanted him to make love to her. But the monk refused such a proposal. This made the wife of the monk's brother to take revenge (*paliganna*) from him and she tore her cloths and ran home to her husband. She said to him "your brother tried to trouble [rape] me". This made the monk's brother very angry and he thought to take revenge from him. He went to the monk and told him that their late parents had given some treasures (*vastuvak*) to the neighbouring villager, which he could not get hold of it along. Having believed the word of the brother, the monk decided (*tiranayakala*) to go with him. After reaching a thick jungle (*gana kelayak*) the monk's brother said "I have brought you here to cut your legs and hands (*ata-paya*) because you had trouble (*karadara*) [rape] to my wife" The monk was surprised (*puduma una*). But the unkind brother believed his wife's word and crippled his brother and dumped him in the jungle. At this point the crippled monk started to sing some sacred verses of *Sattipattana*. While this was happening, an old woman who came to jungle to collect some firewood heard the beautifully singing sacred verses and found him. She took him to her home, where she treated and cured him. While the crippled man was living in the old woman's home he heard the message of the king.

Upon agreeing to catch the stealer of the prince's flower garden the cripple man was placed in the gardener's hut. While he was lying in the hut he used to sing sacred verses of *Sattipattana*. In the middle of the night seven fairies (*diviyanganaviyan*) came to steal flowers and they heard a sweet voice (*mihiri kata handak*) and approached to the place where the voice came from. In the third day they heard the same voice and wanted to go into the hut and

asked whether he could open the door. Then he replies, "I can't open the door because I am crippled" On hearing this one of the fairies put her divine cloth (*diva saluwa*) into the hut and wanted him to touch it. It gave him back his arms and legs but he refused to open the door and did not want to give her divine cloth back because he wanted to show the king who had been stealing flowers from his garden.

At this point six fairies flew away but one could not fly back without a divine cloth. When the king arrived the fairy told him the reason why they had been stealing flowers, because they used them to worship Buddha's footprint daily. The king wanted to know where the footprint was that everybody had heard about but had not yet seen. At that point the fairy promised to king to show the place and advised him to follow a flower trail leading to the footprint then the man [monk] returned the divine cloth to the fairy. The king, Nissankamalla, and the monk had no problem locating the footprint after following the flower trail. Having come to the mountain the King was ready to worship the footprint but he could not worship it because of the unbearable light that flashed from the footprint into his eyes [because the footprint was on a shine gem] so that he put a piece of cloth (*saluva*) onto the footprint and worshipped it by the five fold bending of his body. For protection against future human destruction he covered the [original] footprint with a huge stone and crate, a facsimile copy of the footprint below it. The narrator said that today we worship the exact copy of the footprint, which made by king Nissankamalla.

This narrative enacts a popular version of the Sinhala story about the discovery and construction of the sacred footprint by the act of human beings. This local story has been constructed around the king of Nissankamalla. Similarly, less popular stories of the discovering of Sri Pāda by King Bahatiya[tissa] (143-167 A.D), who ruled in the kingdom of Anuradhapura, has the same precise narrative structure though it has been differently cast. Hence, I will not present that story here, but will instead provide a somewhat different narrative which has appeared in the "subaltern pilgrims

literature". Interestingly, as in the popular oral tradition, the presence of Nissankamalla is prominently cast in this subaltern pilgrims' literature.

However, some of the subaltern pilgrims' literature made reference to Nissankamalla only as to determine the historical juncture where the discovery of Sri Pāda occurred for them. For example, the poetic pamphlet, "the praise of ancient Sri Pāda"³¹³ (*purāna himagatha vannana*) refers to one *mal Vāddā* (lit. flower Vāddā), a member of hunting community, as the discoverer of the path to Sri Pāda. Mal Vāddā was the gardener of one of the royal gardens of Nissankamalla to whom Vāddā had informed after he discovered the path to Sri Pāda himself. However, it is not always the case, for the stories appeared in the popular poetic literature quite frequently and depicted the discovering of Sri Pāda by the king Nissankamalla, who was the prominent figure believed by ordinary pilgrims to have discovered Sri Pāda.

It is also important to note here a view of a Buddhist monk at Sri Pāda temple, given to me as a response to a question I posed to him; what was Sri Pāda before any human occupation? He replied "Before the king Nissankamalla we don't see human beings worship at Sri Pāda until the gods—particularly God Saman—occupied this place and worshiped the sacred footprint. After humans began to worship this place the worship of gods was confined to the off-season (*avāraya*) of the pilgrimage. We, humans, worship Sri Pāda for a six month period in each year whereas as gods worship it in the rest of the year".

These 'subaltern' narratives provide some light on how the divine occupation of Sri Pāda fell into the hands of Buddhist Kings, and, eventually, how it became a place of Buddhist worship.

The Nationalist Narration

The main origin story of Sri Pāda, in the Sinhala Buddhist tradition, as I discussed before, was initially narrated through "ancient" Pali chronicles like Mahavamsa and it was later cast the other Sinhala literary productions in a more elaborate manner by the erudite Buddhist monks. This main story is now being reified as 'real' history,

³¹³ The author is unknown, with no published date but the publisher is Gunasiri Prakasakaya, 2003. Olcott Mavatha Colombo 11.

and, it is repeatedly proclaimed in order to remind pilgrims by the Buddhist monks through the daily preaching known as “*anusāsanava*” and other important religious events at the temple. The daily *anusāsanava* usually takes place three times a day as the integral part of the ‘official’ ritual (*tevava*) programme at the temple. In the *anusāsanava*, the officiate monks repeatedly remind the congregation, as I noticed, that Sri Pāda has become a sacred place for Buddhists not only because it was blessed and visited by the present [Guthama] Buddha, but also by the other previous Buddhas (Kakusandha, Konagama and Kasyapa) as well. Such previously mentioned narration (the story of four previous Buddha’s visit to Sri Pāda) first appeared in the thirteenth century Buddhist chronicle, Pūjāvaliya, and today such narrativization is implicitly incorporated into daily ‘official’ temple speeches in order to enhance the strong Buddhist character of Sri Pāda temple.

This kind of talk, not only of Sri Pāda but also of ‘Sinhala culture’, was by no means uncommon. Similar talks have been repeatedly spoken about at the annual “official” ceremonies of Sri Pāda temple, particularly by the chief Buddhist monks of the temple staff, the provincial politicians and the other public “officials” are indirectly connected to the temple affairs. For example, it is worthwhile to summarize such a speech made by the cultural affairs minister of the Sabaragamuwa Provincial council at the large gathering of annual concluding ceremony of Sri Pāda temple in 2002. However, I must say the tone and the content of the speech does not differ from repeated assertions frequently heard in such gatherings, where the historical continuity of the 2500 years of Buddhist culture are promptly highlighted (see Spencer 1990c). Interestingly, the cultural affairs minister tried to convince the gathering that the pilgrimage’s concluding ceremony at Sri Pāda temple was an “ancient practice”, which has been, as he put it, ‘continuing from 2500 years as the integral part of the Sinhala Buddhist heritage’. For him, the temple’s guardian god, Saman, became a Buddhist before Buddhism was formally introduced into the country by the son of Asoka Emperor, *arahat* Mahinda. Hence, the minister claimed that “unlike other deities, god Saman is a Buddhist deity, there is no harm for Buddhist to propitiate him, truly, it is not against the ways of Buddhist conduct and propitiating, God Saman is always a part of our Buddhist cultural heritage”.

Assertions of this kind clearly indicate one of the expressive motivations behind the organizing of such grandiose collective religious/cultural ceremonies in the advent of 'mounting' ethno-nationalism(s) in the postcolonial Sri Lanka.

In general, such large scale public ceremonies, as I have pointed out elsewhere, are not necessarily used for religious purposes, but largely to propagate and secure collective 'Buddhist nationalist identity', which became more susceptible after the escalation of the ethnic conflict between the government and the separatist Tamil militancy after 1983 (De Silva: 2000). The production of recent versions of 'shared Buddhist identity' can't only be seen at the national pilgrimage sites like Sri Pāda, as some anthropologists (e.g., Tennakoon 1988, Spencer 1990 and Tambiah 1992) have pointed out, but, such symbolic unity among Sinhala Buddhists can also be seen in the promotion of archaeology, nationalist history and development ritual etc. Similarly, as Spencer has correctly pointed out, the invocation of such shared Sinhala Buddhist identity even can be found at a small public gathering in a village setting (1990c: 284). In the context of national importance Sri Pāda temple promotion of such nationalist sentiment undoubtedly happen in many forms.

The speeches made by the monks, politicians and the provincial administrative officers at the temple's 'official' ceremonial gatherings can be identified as one particular form of promoting nationalist ideas. As I found, their speeches explicitly or implicitly acknowledged the significance of Sri Pāda temple for "Buddhists" and its relation to 'Sinhala Buddhist identity'. This in turn may legitimise economic and political control of Sri Pāda temple by Buddhist monks.

Considering the facts that I have presented so far, the point I want to make here is how the mythical occupation of Sri Pāda by Buddhists being (re)constructed and repeatedly expressed in different narratives forms, in deferent flavour, in various contexts in the religious history of Sri Lanka. This origin myth, like the origin myth of 'Sinhala Nation' has provided the firm and authoritative ideology for the legitimisation of "Sinhala Buddhist" to control Sri Pāda.

Appendix II: Hindu and Muslim claims on the Sacred Footprint

The sacredness of Sri Pāda is not only claimed by Buddhists but also by other religious groups such as Hindus, Muslims and Catholics. In this section, I want to explore these non-Buddhist mytho-historical claims, specifically those of Hindus and Muslims. Let me first begin with the Tamil Hindu story.

Sri Pāda is regarded by Hindus as having been made a sacred ground by Lord Siva, one of the supreme gods of the Hindu pantheon. The origin myth of Sri Pāda as a foot-print of Siva, popularly known as Sivan-oli-padam, is widely believed among Tamil Hindus in the country³¹⁴. The basis for Tamil Hindu belief in the Sivan-oli-padam, according to the Chief Priest (76) of the Kotahena (North of Colombo) Ponnambalam Vanisvaram Siva temple is this: Siva appeared in his dancing manifestation, on this mountain for the performance of certain devotional austerities, at the end of which, in celebration of his abode there, he left the impression of his foot upon the mountain-top. Another Hindu priest at the Sri Kadiresan temple in the South of Colombo told me a somewhat different story as follows:

When Siva was living in Mount Kailash, a mountain in the Himalayas, he made a journey from the Himalayas to Rameshvaram in South India where he saw that people were poorer than in Sri Lanka. Siva then left Rameshvaram for Sivan-oli-padam, in one of his most popular forms, that of Nataraja (the dancing form), and made his cosmic dance there. As a result, a war broke out, but that war could solve all the malicious things in Sri Lanka because his dance created the sacred footprint for people to venerate that is Sivan-oli-padam³¹⁵.

Interestingly, I found another myth of Sivan-oli-padam in the appendix of William Skeen's book on *Adam's Peak* (1870). The story seems to be translated from Tamil to English by P.K.T. Kanageratina, MODR. But the writer of the story is unknown.

³¹⁴ They also call it Shivanadipadam Mallei (the mountain of Shiva's footprint) and Swangarrhanan (The ascent to Heaven).

³¹⁵ Both brief interviews were carried out on 12th and 19th of June, 2002.

However, this story was forwarded to Skeen by H.S.O. Russell, then the Government Agent of the Central Province. Here is the story:

In Ceylon there are places dedicated to Siva such as Trincomalee or Thadchanakaylaysam [...], Thirukkachcharam [...] &c. There is a Puranam [...] in Sanskrit (which is the mother language of Tamil) relating to Thadchanakaylasam or Trincomalee, called Thadchana-kaylaya-manmeium [...]. The following was recorded in the 6th and 7th chapters of that book.

In the middle of the mountain called Sivanolipatham, three rivers or kankai rise out of Sivan's foot [...]. From my (Sivan's) foot, three rivers issue out, and the names are Mavillie-kankai [...] Manikka-kankai [...] and Karary-kankai [...]. Mavillie-kankai flows towards the North, reaches Sivan's place at Trincomalee, and falls into the sea south of it. Manikka-kankai flows towards the East and passes by Katherkamum [...] a place dedicated to Supermania-swamy, son of Siva, and then falls into the eastern sea. Kavary-kankai flows towards the West, and passes into the place of Siva, called Therukkachcharum (situated at Mantotte in Mannar). These three kankais are "highly meritorious streams". The names of these three rivers, the directions they take in their course, their connection with the above-named three famous places dedicated to Sivan's worship, the name "Sivanolipatham" by which this peak is usually known, and the fact of these four places and the three rivers being recognised by Sivaitees as places peculiarly adopted for the worship of Siva, at the present as well as in the ancient times, show beyond doubt that the mountain in the Central Province of the Island of Ceylon which is called Sivanolipatham in Tamil—Adam's Peak in English—is the very mountain spoken of in the Sanskrit work Thedchana-kaylaya-manmeium written several centuries ago (1870: 295-296).

This fascinating story describes the sacred footprint as having been made into a sacred ground of Lord Siva, and it also describes the elaborate Tamil Hindus sacred geography in Sri Lanka. Though the story is said to be taken from one of the ancient Puranas, a prominent Tamil literary scholar in Sri Lanka told me that no such myth

appears in any of the eighteen Puranas.³¹⁶ Similarly, another distinguished Tamil historian has recently edited a book titled *Temples of Siva in Sri Lanka* with no reference to the Siva's connection with the Sivan-oli-padam (Pathmanathan 1999). Confirmed by the prominent archaeologist and historian, S. Paranavitana in his book *The God of Adam's Peak*, he states, 'to my knowledge, there is no work of any antiquity which refers to the Footprint on Adam's Peak as that of God Siva' (1957: 21).

This does not mean that there has been no historical claim, or Hindu engagement with, Sri Pāda. For example, the Mahavamsa states that a group of Hindu Saivite priests began to control Sri Pāda under the patronage of the Sinhala king, Rājāsinha I (1581-1595) of the Kotte kingdom (Mv. Ch.93 v 4-17). They controlled Sri Pāda for nearly 160 years before it was handed over to a Buddhist monk by Kīrtisiri Rājasinghe (1747-1780), himself a Hindu Tamil king, who later became a pious Buddhist king of the Kandyan royal court (Mv. Ch. 100, v.221) (see Chapter 2). Even before that, Ibn Battuta, a Muslim naval trader or traveller states that, 'Arya Chakravarti, the Hindu king of Jaffan, brought with him four *yogis* who were in the habit of visiting the foot-mark every year; and with these they were also accompanied by four Brahmanas and ten of the king's companions' (cf. Paranavitana 1957: 21). This account confirms that Hindus made the pilgrimage to Sri Pāda by the 14th century, and even before³¹⁷. But the point I want make here is that, unlike the Mahavamsa, any Tamil claim on Sri Pāda, or more precisely Sivan-oli-padam, has not been prominent in their terrain of mytho-historical knowledge production. This confirms Daniel's suggestion that the Tamil Hindu conception of history puts more emphasis on heritage than on concrete history, which is emphasised by Sinhala Buddhist (1989: 22).

³¹⁶ Learned through a personal communication with Prof. Sivathambi. The oldest Purana is believed to date back to 300 CE, and the most recent ones to 1300-1400 CE. See also Shulman, (1980) who analyses the Siva myths of Tamil Nadu in the light of the many traditions that have contributed to their formation, including Vedic, epic, puranic, classical Tamil and folk traditions (1980).

³¹⁷ William Skeen has produced the "positivist" historiographical account on "Adam's Peak" and concluded that 'the oldest probable period' from which to date the legend (of Sivan-oli-padam) is that immediately following the invasion of the Solians (the South Indian Tamil invaders) in 1023 CE. He says, "There is no doubt about the fact that the Sivan-oli-padam was resorted to by Hindu pilgrims in the early part of the fourteenth century and as the pilgrimage was then an established custom...(1870 36-37).

Although the authoritative tradition of Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka, and even South India, has simply forgotten or dropped the mythology of Siva's connection with the Sivan-oli-padam, it is still popular among Hindu priests and the wider Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka. For example popular myths among estate Tamils, who mostly live in the central hill country of Sri Lanka, interchangeably claim the sacred foot-print as that of the god Siva and of the god Vishnu. Their annual ritual journey to Sri Pāda is more explicitly rooted in their belief in the footprint as that of god Vishnu. I found that the myth of Vishnu³¹⁸ is predominantly popular among plantation Tamil Hindus, while the myth of Siva is popular among non-plantation Tamil Hindus, who live in the plantation area and elsewhere on the island.

The Muslims of Sri Lanka believe that the sacred foot-print is that of Adam; more precisely they call it 'Baba-adam-mallei' (the footprint of Adam). Their engagement with the sacred mountain can be traced back to early Arabic writings of travellers and the traders³¹⁹. However, the general belief about the mythical origin of the sacred footprint is that after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit and were expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam was further punished by being forced to stand on one foot on the mountaintop³²⁰. This long ordeal left the print of Adam's foot on the mountain. Adam's fall from Paradise is mentioned several times in the Koran and G. Sale says in his translation of the Koran:

The Mohammedans say that when they were cast down from paradise, Adam fell on the isle of Ceylon or Serendib, and Eve near Joddah (the port of Mecca) in Arabia; and that after a separation of 200 years, Adam was, on his repentance, conducted by the angel Gabriel to a mountain near Mecca, where he found and knew his wife, the mountain being thence named Arafat, and

³¹⁸ The story is related to Rama as a personification of Vishnu. The well-known account of Rama's epic battle with Ravana, the demon king of Lanka, exists in oral and textual traditions throughout Asia, but especially in South India and Sri Lanka.

³¹⁹ There is an Arabic inscription found on a side of a cave inscription (*bagava lena*) of Nissanka Malla (1187-1196) at Sri Pāda which inscribed as "Muhammad, may God bless him (the father of) man" (Senaveratna: 1950: 17).

³²⁰ But there are several myths about what happened after Adam and Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit.

that he afterwards retired with her to Ceylon, where they continued to propagate their species. (D'herbelot, Bib.Orient.p.55) (Sale, London 1734: 6 n6)³²¹

A similar story was narrated somewhat differently to me by a Muslim priest [Lebbe] (65) of a village mosque from Kahattagasdigiya in the North Central Province where I met him, together with two fellow priests, at the Sri Pāda temple. He narrated the story in Sinhala:

The God Allah told Adam and Eve, 'You do what ever you want to do, but don't eat the fruit (*gedi*) of the Forbidden Tree'. But they did not pay attention to the word of Allah and they ate the fruit. Then Allah said 'You did the wrong thing so I expel you from heaven to earth (*bimata*)'. When they were expelled from heaven to earth, Adam put his first footstep on this peak [Adam's peak], and his other footstep on the Kuragala³²². Eve put her footstep on to Mecca [*makkama*]. At the time they came here, no one lived on the earth. They were crying for seven days. Their tears ran down to the sea and some turned into precious gems (*menik una*). They accepted their wrongdoing, and then God Allah brought them together. At that point they felt hungry. Then God Allah sent a messenger (*deva dutaya*) to the earth to explain to them the basic cultivation techniques. After the course of time they had two children; one was a boy and the other a girl. Then they got married and had children; so the human world was created. That is why we believe this footprint is that of Adam, the footprint of the first man on the earth.

Such a claim can be further explored through the knowledge produced by voyagers, missionaries, traders and travellers, who had historically interacted with Sri Pāda. The narratives those figures produced I collectively refer to as "diasporic narratives". The diasporic narratives show us how the Muslim association with Sri Pāda was historically established and then flourished.

³²¹ Quoted from Aksland (1990: 110).

³²² The rock of Kura: recently this place has become the most popular Muslim pilgrimage site in the island

The history of the Muslims of Sri Lanka is part of the history of Arab civilization in the East³²³. From the middle of the sixth century CE, the expansion of Arab commercial activities in the Indian Ocean gradually caused the expansion of Muslim settlement in South India and Sri Lanka (see Kamil Asad 1993; Devaraja 1994; McGilvray 1999). However, the earliest Muslim engagement at Sri Pāda, according to Paranavitana, was reported in the 9th century [851 CE] travel account of the Arab merchant Soleyman. In this account it states, 'It is thought Adam ascended, and there left the print of his foot, in a rock which is seventy cubits in length; and they [Muslims] say that Adam at the same time stood with his other foot in the sea. About this mountain are mines of [gem] rubies, opals and amethysts' (cf. Skeen 1871:46). However, Soleyman refers to the mountain by the name of 'Al-Rohoun', as mentioned by the 9th century North Indian poet and dramatist Rājasekhara in his work *Balaramayana*. Paranavitana claimed that the early Arab travellers adopted this name, from which followed the use of 'Al-Rohoun' by the people of North India (1958: 17-20). Ruhuna is the ancient province (*ruhunu rata*) to which Sri Pāda belonged. Van Sanden also writes of Abu Zayd, an Arab traveller in 910 CE, who described the country and its people, making references to the port of Galle as an entrepot, where goods from China and the Far East were traded for goods from the West and the Middle East (Aboosally 2002: 47).

Marco Polo, a Mediterranean merchant, in his voyage to the East, particularly to Sri Lanka and South India at the end of the 13th century, gave a brief description of his visit to island. According to his account, he did not visit Sri Pāda but repeated what he heard about Buddhist and Muslim pilgrimage to the sacred mountain. He wrote that the pilgrims went there to see a grave but did not mention whether it was that of Adam or Buddha. Moreover, he did not refer to Christian engagement with that grave, though he was well aware of the other Christian pilgrimage sites in the region, particularly the tomb of Saint Thomas in South India, to which Christians and Muslims travelled. He further confirmed in his account that, unlike Buddhists and Muslims, Christians were not engaging in Sri Pāda pilgrimages at this time because,

³²³ An economic history of Islamic civilization in the Indian Ocean has been well documented by K.N.Chaudhuri (1985).

‘[A]ccōrding to the Holy Scripture of our Church, the sepulchre of Adam is not in that part of the world”(cf. Yule 1875: 298-313). He must be right because the Christian, more precisely Catholic, engagement with Sri Pāda began around the early 16th century with the advent of Western powers to the Indian subcontinent.

Like Marco Polo, a number of other travellers visited the island, but their accounts seemingly did not provide any reference to their visit to Sri Pāda. It seems to me what was reported about Sri Pāda was largely based on the stories given by other pilgrims, most likely Muslim pilgrims. These accounts are very brief and straightforward. For example, the travel account of Odoric—a Beatus or semi-saint of the Roman Church who travelled from 1316-1330—as translated and edited by Colonel Henry Yule, explained:

In this country also there is an exceeding great mountain, of which the folk relate that it was upon it that Adam mourned for his son for one hundred years. In the midst of this mountain is a certain beautiful level place, in which there is a lake of no great size, but having a great depth of water. This they say was derived from the tears shed by Adam and Eve; but I do not believe that to be the truth, seeing that the water naturally springs from the soil. The bottom of this pool is full of precious stones and the water greatly abounded in leeches (Yule 1913:171).

There are other travel accounts, however, which reported their own experience of journeying to the sacred mountain. For instance, Giovanni de’ Marignolli, a monk in the Franciscan priory of Santa Croce in Florence was journeying with some other monks to the tomb of Saint Thomas in Madras, but was caught in a storm and came to Sri Lanka in late 1340s. He gives an extensive account of the geographical and ecological surroundings of the sacred mountain, and describes how Adam made the sacred footprint there, his account also informing us of the growing popularity of the myth of Adam among Muslims at the time of his visit to the island (see Yule 1913). For Muslim engagement at Sri Pāda, the account given by Ibn Battuta is worth excavating here. Battuta was born into a family of Muslim legal scholars in Tangier, Morocco, in 1304. He studied law as a young man and in 1325 left his native town to make the pilgrimage, or hajj, to the sacred city of Mecca in Arabia. He travelled to

many parts of the world in 1330 (1332) and he ventured to India to seek employment in the government of the Sultanate of Delhi. In August 1344, Ibn Battuta and the ship crew arrived at the west coast port city of Puttalam in Sri Lanka, where he met the Tamil regional king of Chakkrawartti of the kingdom of Jaffna. Under the patronage of this Tamil king Battuta went on pilgrimage to Sri Pāda and later wrote the account of his journey. Battuta, quite fascinatingly, described the rituals practised by Muslim pilgrims at the sacred site; morning and evening visits to the sacred footprint for three days seems to have been an established practice then among Muslims pilgrims. The offering of gems, jewellery, and gold at the sacred pilgrimage site also seems to be an established custom by this particular period. Moreover, Battuta explained that Imam Abu Abdallah [who died in 953 CE] was the first Muslim pilgrim who found the path to the sacred footprint at Adam's Peak (see Gibb: 1929 (1939) 254-260, Dunn 1986: 241-244). If Battuta was right, it is quite reasonable to accept that the first Muslim pilgrimage to Adam's Peak took place around the tenth century.

These accounts give us some idea of the mythological construction of 'Muslim Adam's Peak'. They also explain how the 'sacredness' of Muslim Adam's Peak was well accepted and popularly venerated by pilgrims from the Middle Eastern world even beyond that. In other words, the 'diasporic narratives' clearly confirm that Sri Pāda was not only a pilgrimage site which attracted local communities, but also a sacred site of which attracted various diasporic 'communities', unlike other popular sacred sites on the island. These pilgrims not only came from the Middle Eastern world, but from the Far East too; for example, in Chinese mythology, the first created man who impressed the sacred footprint bore the name of Pawn-koo and sometimes the name of Foe, (i.e. Buddha)³²⁴.

³²⁴ Skeen says that 'The Chinese books repeat the popular belief, that the hollow of the sacred footstep contains water, 'which does not dry up all the year round', and that invalids recover health by drinking from the well at the foot of the mountain, into which 'the sea-water enters free from salt' (1870: 24). Today we don't see such a well at Sri Pāda, but, one monk told me there is a place called "China peela" a few yards down from the temple where water is collected. Such a place name clearly shows a Chinese presence at Sri Pāda.

Appendix III. Colonisers claim of Sri Pāda as 'Adam's Peak'

Colonial knowledge was frequently based on misunderstandings that led to an uneasy relationship between knowledge and power. It was often the uneasiness of this relationship that made colonial knowledge, in the end, so effective (Nicholas B. Dirks 1992: 176).

As Dirks has pointed out, the search of this section is directed at discussing the "effective" aspect of colonial knowledge in the discursive construction of Sri Pāda. What I explore here is how different authoritative discourses emerge about Sri Pāda from the three different colonial powers, (Portuguese, Dutch and British). As we now know, authoritative discourses on the 'colonized' were largely produced through the agents of the colonial governments, military personnel, Christian missionaries, philologists, and administrators. In this regard, Sri Pāda was not exceptional. I am aware that these forms of knowledge production changed with alterations, or modifications in the practices of colonialism. In this respect, I investigate what got identified and counted by colonial authorized knowledges as 'Adam's Peak'³²⁵. Such an investigation is no longer new to anthropology and the human sciences at large. In the last two decades, a large body of knowledge has been produced in order to unpack "a particular construction of colonial knowledge", under the sub-discipline of the 'anthropology of colonialism' (Pels 1997). This line of research has been an attractive path for several South Asian anthropologists, especially on India (e.g., Cohn 1985, 1996; Guha 1982, 1997; Dirks 1992; Inden 1990; Pandey 1990, Chatterjee 1993 and Chakrabarty 2002) and on Sri Lanka (e.g., Spencer 1990b; Rogers 1994; Scott 1994; and Jeganathan and Ismail 1995). The general significance of the emergence of these "decolonising projects" can be captured in the words of Bernard S. Cohn, who argued in the mid-1980s that, "The conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge" (1985: 276, 1996: 16). Cohn's formulation is helpful to our understanding of Sri Lanka and other "colonized" societies too. But in my view, there is a limitation in such analysis because most of the "decolonising projects" in South Asia (India and Sri Lanka) have located their fields of work and expertise in

³²⁵ The orientalist knowledge production on Adam's Peak was not only confined into its socio-cultural and historical formations but also similar attention was paid to 'understand' its 'natural world' (See: appendix V, for some discussion on this aspect).

the 19th and 20th centuries in order to unpack ‘British colonial knowledge production’, while paying scanty attention to ‘pre-British knowledge production’; for example, as far as India and Sri Lanka are concerned, the Portuguese and Dutch ‘colonial knowledge productions’. I argue that to possess a reasonably comprehensive understanding of culture, religion, and history of the various sub-continental regions in the early 18th century and before is a prerequisite for our understanding of the transformations which the British instituted. As Malalgoda puts it, ‘Failure to do so can result in failure to grasp the significance of some of the key terms that occur in nineteenth century debates’ (1997: 66)³²⁶. Let me first talk about how the Portuguese and Dutch viewed “Sri Pāda”.

Portuguese and Dutch Discourses on Sri Pāda

Politically speaking, in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, Sri Pāda was situated in the South-West geo-political border territory of the Kandyan kingdom, in other words, in the region of Sabaragamuva, where control of Kandyan was through the administrative jurisdiction of the officer known as a *disave* (provincial ruler). However, Sabaragamuva was easily accessed from the adjacent coastal regions which the Portuguese and Dutch occupied. Hence, Sabaragamuva was always sandwiched between the maritime regions and the up country hill regions. In this regard, Sabaragamuva was not fully controlled by either the Kandyan kings or the new conquerors of the Maritime Provinces. During this time, Sri Pāda temple was primarily controlled by Hindu priests known as *āndiyas*. Both the Portuguese and Dutch colonizers had a prime target of their colonial projects in the island despite their mercantilist domination in the Maritime Provinces and the convert of the colonized into their respective religions: namely Catholicism and Protestant Christianity. According to the Sri Lankan historian C. R. de Silva, there may have been about 100,000 to 175,000 Catholics in the Sinhala segments of the Maritime Provinces by the early seventeenth century—that is roughly one-third of the

³²⁶ Malalgoda puts this against David Scott’s argument relating to religious change in nineteenth century Sri Lanka. In this debate, Scott argues that the adoption of *agama* “religion” and *buddhagama* “Buddhism” by Buddhists was the most important result of their confrontation with Christian missionaries in the nineteenth century. Hence Scott claims Buddhists began to consider themselves as having a religion of their own, and as belonging to a separate religious community, in [after] the nineteenth century. But, in those earlier stages, it did not have its later meaning (1997: 57).

population (1975: 84, cf. Roberts 1989: 79). However, by 1911 there were almost 340,000 Catholics amid the country's population (Kuruppu 1924: 51; cf. Stirrat 1992: 204n). As a basis for Catholic expansionism to the interior of the island, the Portuguese attacked Sabaragamuva in 1599 and captured a considerable part of the region. In this attack they destroyed the main shrine of the god Saman, the guardian deity of Sri Pāda, at Ratnapura and constructed a Catholic church and garrison on this Buddhist sacred site.³²⁷ The claiming of Sri Pāda as "Adam's footprint" was, without doubt, part of the Portuguese expansion of Catholicism on the Island³²⁸. However, as I mentioned before, the myth of Adam in relation to Sri Pāda existed long before the beginning of the Portuguese Catholic expansion project on the island.

Accounts of Catholic Missionary chroniclers

Most of the chroniclers whom I focus on here visited the island as a vital part of the Portuguese colonial project in the regions, which needed the production of detailed accounts of the island, its people, and the failures in governing them. These accounts were originally published in Portuguese, and later edited and translated into English, and partially into the local languages too. For my discussion, I draw on the English translations of De Queyroz (1930), Joao Ribeiro (1948) and Diego de Couto (1909), and Robert Knox's *An Historical Relation of Ceylon*, written much later. Queyroz wrote his account to explain the reason why the Portuguese failed to establish a Catholic stronghold in Sri Lanka³²⁹. The most visible fixation in Queyroz's account, as well as in Ribeyro's early 17th century colonial account, was to homogeneously categorize pilgrims as "heathen", and the relic that they venerated as a work of "heathenish hypocrite". This was to give the impression that non-Christian beliefs

³²⁷ Skeen, (1870: 122-123) and Bell (1916: 37). However, this shrine was rebuilt by Rajasinghe II of Kandy in 1658.

³²⁸ However, the Portuguese Catholic missionaries were not at all inclined to believe in that version of the foot-print of Adam; some attributed it to St. Thomas and others to the Eunuch of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia (see Skeen 1870: 54).

³²⁹ Queyroz was born in Portugal in 1617 A.D. He became a novice with the Jesuits in Coimbra in 1631 and he began missionary work in South India in 1635. Between 1677-1680 he became the head of the Jesuits in India. But he never visited Sri Lanka and his production of knowledge on the island was mostly dependent on documentary material and stories narrated by other missionaries and travellers. His work was translated into English by a Sri Lankan scholar, Father S.G. Perera, in 1930.

and popular practices were based on “false” assumptions. Such a stance, according to Malalgoda (1997), had precedents in a Europe that was in the throes of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. In their eyes, resemblances between their own religion and those of others were not simply deceptive, ‘but the Devil, who had tremendous importance in Christian thinking at the time....such resemblances themselves were proof that other religions were diabolical counterfeits’ (1997: 67).

However, though these missionary chroniclers disparaged the non-Christian religions as “heathenish” or “false”, they were compelled at the same time to find ways in which to introduce “true” beliefs and practices to the “heathens”. They did this mainly by using force, which became manifest in attacks on the temporalities of the other religions: the destruction of temples and their contents, and the expulsion of their residents and custodians (Abeyasinghe 1966: 206-07), and through imposing Christian belief and practices on the “native” by the strategy of religious ‘conversion’. This combination of temporal and spiritual conquests can be seen in the other chroniclers’ accounts. For example, Robert Knox confirmed that by the mid-seventeenth century “the European Nations” had claimed the sacred footprint site as of the Adam.

On the South side of CONDE UDA [*kanda uda*] is a Hill, supposedly the highest on this island, called in the CHINGULAY [Sinhalese], ‘HAMALELL [*samanala*]; but by the Portuguese³³⁰ and the European Nations, Adam’s Peak. It is sharp like a sugar-loaf, and on the top a flat stone with the print of a foot like a man’s is on it, but far bigger, being about two foot long. The people of this land count it meritorious to go and worship this impression; and generally about their New year, which is in March, the men, women, and children go up this vast and high mountain to worship..(1681: 3)³³¹.

³³⁰ Knox says that Portuguese call the Adam’s peak as ‘Pico-Adam’ (1681: 72).

³³¹ Robert Knox was a British marine captain who was imprisoned with his crew for a period of almost 20 years under the Rajasingha II (1635-1687) in the Kandyan royal court. At that time, Maritime Provinces were under the Portuguese or Dutch control. Knox wrote his account after his escape and published it with the title “An Historical Relation of the Island Ceylon” under the publisher of the Royal Society at the Robe and Crown in St. Paul’s Church Yard in 1681.

Indeed, De Couto³³², another Portuguese missionary chronicler, claims that the sacred footprint at Sri Pāda mountain was not of Adam, but of a Catholic Saint, Thomas, who had also impressed the mark of his knees upon a stone in a quarry at Colombo (cf. Skeen 1870: 60-61). However, he went on to say the Portuguese gave the footprint the name of the Adam Peak [Pico Adam] and '[but] Sinhalese name it 'DEWA GORATA'' [*deviyange rata*³³³]. This claim of De Couto was later documented differently by a British military personal, Robert Percival, in his "Account of the Island of Ceylon" in 1803: "The Roman Catholic priests have also taken advantage of the 'current superstitions' to forward the propagation of their own tenets, and a chapel which they have erected on the mountain is annually frequented by vast numbers of black Christians of the Portuguese and Malabar race" (208p). Similarly, the well-known British administrator, James Emerson Tennent, in his "Christianity of Ceylon" in 1850 pointed out that the conflicting claims by "Portuguese authorities" on the sacred footprint was divided between St. Thomas and the Eunuch of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia (133p). Regardless of the different claims existing during this period, it is clear by the seventeenth century that the belief of Sri Pāda as "Christian Adam" was an established one. And it is further evident in the work of Paolo Da Trindade³³⁴, a Portuguese Catholic missionary who wrote briefly but enthusiastically about Sri Pāda in his voluminous chronicle of "The Spiritual Conquest of The East":

There are many notable things found in this island, of which we could make a long description, but we mention only some, both to avoid prolixity and because they do not appertain to our history. And the chief of them is the

³³² Diego de Couto served the Portuguese Crown as a soldier, the chief keeper of the records in Goa, and official chronicler of India. He wrote the history of the Portuguese Eastern empire from 1526. His "Decadas Da Asia" was written and published intermittently from 1602 onwards. The material on Ceylon by Couto is in his 'Fifth Decada' (cf. Arasaratnam, S. 1978: 28).

³³³ The literal meaning is "God's country", but this usage usually referred to the "territory of the deity Saman"

³³⁴ He was born in 1571 and died in 1651 at the age of eighty. He was a well known Franciscan priest who wrote extensively on Catholicism in the eastern part of the world and his work relating to Sri Lanka was translated and edited by Edmund Peiris and F.A. Meersman under the title "Chapters on The Introduction of Christianity to Ceylon" in 1972.

Peak that they call of Adam. Which is a very lofty mountain at a distance of a day's march from our fort of Safregam [Sabaragamuva] to the side of the East and twenty leagues from the coast....they say it is the footprint of BUDUM, who is one of their gods and whom they say was a giant, eighteen carpenter's "covados" tall. Our people [Christians] call it the peak of Adam and say the footprint is his, but its proper name is SARMANALA [*samanala*]....(cf. Peiris et al 1972: 23).

These assertions provide some discursive justification about how the Portuguese established rather constructed the Christian connotation(s) on the sacred footprint, and legitimatised it through the religious practices of newly converted "non-heathen" pilgrims at the site of 'Adam' footprint. Interestingly, under this Catholic missionary project, there were no historical records that the temple had been controlled by Catholic missionaries even when their dominancy operated powerfully on the island. The construction of the mytho-historical Adam around Sri Pāda was continuously constructed in more complex ways under the production of Dutch knowledges on 'Adam's Peak'.

In 1689 the Ceylon Dutch Consistory assessed the religious situation on the island in a letter to the United East India Company and I quote part of it to show how the Dutch thought about "natives", specifically Sinhala religious practices:

The Portuguese, the late occupants of the country, destroyed the dagābas and heathen edifices, and did not tolerate the public exercises of devil-worship. We also issued in 1682 strict placates against all such ceremonies, and inflicted heavy penalties. Heathenism, which for the last years had lost its influences to a great extent, so that many left it for Christianity..(cf. Walters 1996:71).

The Portuguese lost their hegemonic power over the Maritime Provinces on the island to Dutch East India Company in 1656. Despite losing their power of the mercantilist economic activities on the island to the Dutch, their ideological influences on islanders continuously remained vital - even under the humiliation acts of the Dutch reform Church - through the religious institutions that were established

in their occupancy. To the Dutch [Protestant] missionaries, who arrived after the Roman Catholic ones, the Adam's Peak was no less real than to their predecessors. Among them was Philippus Baldaeus, who in the preface of his book on South India and Sri Lanka—dated 15 August, 1671—defined “the noble object” of missionary activity as “the conversion of souls that were caught in the snares of Satan” (Baldaeus 1960: Ixi, cf. Malalgoda 1997: 68).

Under such “noble object” the Dutch took Sri Pāda affairs seriously and in March, 1672, a group of Dutch soldiers were sent to Sri Pāda for the examination of the footprint³³⁵. And, they never kept out or marginalized Sri Pāda from their authoritative knowledge production process. Apparently, it was much more ambiguous because the Dutch knowledge production on ‘exact’ Adam's Peak had confused it with other rock (hill) temples on the Island, particularly the ancient rock temple at Mulgirigala in the Southern district of Hambantota. This rock temple was identified by the Dutch themselves as “Adam's Berg”. However, the confusion seems to me to remain unsolved even in the main accounts of the Dutch missionary chroniclers, who had produced authoritative ‘knowledge’ on Sri Pāda.

In this regard the accounts of Francois Valentyn and Philip Baldaeus are worth excavating, at least briefly³³⁶. Both chroniclers wished to construct a “concise account” of Adam's Peak but ended up with serious confusion. However, the remarkable feature of their narrativization of Sri Pāda was the use of Evangelical language familiar to the missionary and their audiences. In fact Valentyn and Baldaeus had little problem deciding in favour of the historical precedence of Christianity over Buddhism. For Valentyn, “Buddha is a disciple of Apostle Thomas”. This indicates that the Dutch missionary knew little, both about the

³³⁵ Skeen, 1870: 70.

³³⁶ Valentyn was born in 1666 and in 1684 he qualified as a Minister of the Dutch Reformed Church. He served as a historian (observer and record keeper) to the East India Company and a minister to the Dutch Reformed Church in India for eleven years. He returned to Holland in 1695. However, in 1705 he was again appointed to the Reformed Church in India until April 1714 and he died on 6th August 1727. (see Arsaratnam 1978: 1-14). Philip Baldaeus served in Sri Lanka from 1656 to 1665 as a minister for the Dutch Reformed Church.

historical personage of Gautama Buddha, and his doctrines and even the places of worship for him. What is clear in both the Portuguese and Dutch chroniclers' accounts on Sri Pāda in particular, and other religions in general, is that they were constructed full of errors, misunderstandings and ignorance of the "native" beliefs and practices. In this respect Sri Pāda was recognised as a place of Christian worship, while making the clear distinction between true religion and false religion. Without such a distinction there could be no justification for the missionary enterprise undertaken by neither the Portuguese nor the Dutch, nor in fact, by the British.

British 'Orientalist' Discourses on Sri Pāda

In the nineteenth century, British scholarship on Sri Lankan religions, particularly Buddhism and Hinduism, constructed new fields of study to understand these religions as an object. Hence, colonial discursive knowledge productions on these religions were presented by the 'orientalists', such as British military officers, administrators, and Christian missionaries, who constantly encountered problems due to interpretative difficulties. But the objectification of those religions was considerably more figurative than literal, and this took place purely under verbal encounters, not both verbal and physical attacks, which were widely used under the Portuguese and the Dutch "objectification" of those religions. However, it is not my task to explore the British Orientalist objects of knowledge on "Hinduism" and "Buddhism" or "demonism" in general, but to explore specifically one particular object of knowledge on "Adam's Peak".

The orientalist constructions of "Hinduism" and "Buddhism" have recently been paid substantial attention by several scholars, particularly regarding Buddhism (e.g., Almond, 1988, Scott 1994, Hallisey 1995) and to Hinduism (e.g., van der Veer 1994, 2001, Viswanathan 1998). My understanding on orientalist knowledge productions on Sri Lankan religions, however, is best explained through a specific religious pilgrimage site because knowledge about Sri Pāda was itself part of the larger colonial knowledge productions on doctrines of Sri Lankan religions and their practices.

My concern with the British productions of knowledge on Sri Pāda is not unvarying, because British colonialism itself constituted a changing practice of power and therefore produced and organized historically varying conditions and effects of knowledge. As we shall see, in the earliest orientalist discourses, which appeared in the first quarter of the nineteenth century on Sri Pāda, were different to the late nineteenth century accounts, and likewise the early twentieth century. The scope of this section is to explain how the British 'orientalists' constructed authoritative discursive knowledges on Sri Pāda in the historically shifting conditions of the British empire.

On the morning of 16 February 1796, the British took possession of the Dutch East India Company's garrison at Colombo on the southwest coast of Ceylon. It marked the final capitulation by the Dutch of the Maritime Provinces of the island, which they themselves had captured from the Portuguese a century and a half before, in 1656. After nearly two decades of capitulation of the Maritime Provinces, the British crown became the first European power to establish control over the entire island between 1815 and 1820, by conquest of the Kandyan Kingdom in the central hills of the island. The initial transfer of power in 1815 was a negotiated one, which came soon after resistance from a major indigenous uprising in 1817-1818 met with strong military responses of the British³³⁷. Maintaining control over the newly acquired 'interior', or Kandyan hill territory, was the vital project of the British military agenda at the time. In opposition to unknown 'interior' lands much of the coastal lands were well 'known' and 'ordered' by Portuguese and Dutch colonial projects of conquest and rule that began in the early sixteenth century. For this vital project, the military officials were required to be competent in many fields, such as the judicial and the executive, and also expected to construct a sociological and historical knowledge of the colonized subject of the 'interior' regions. As such, the published

³³⁷ One incident that happened during this negotiation is worth mentioning here: In 1803, Prince Muttusāmi (brother-in-law of the late King Rajadhi Rajasinha), a would be a British sponsored claimant to the throne of Kandy, is asked to cede a province of the Kandyan Kingdom in exchange for assistance. He refuses to cede Sabaragamuva, because it brought substantial revenues and would lead to the loss of Sri Pāda, "the sacrilegious cessation of which would bring down on him". Instead the prince was willing to cede the province of Nuwarakalaviya (de Silva 1953: 100), where the "sacred city of Anuradhapura", which became "national heartland of Sinhala Buddhist" after the late nineteenth century, was situated.

accounts of indigenous history and sociology of the early or 'Old' British colonial knowledge production process instigated the authoritative assumption about 'Ceylon'. Undoubtedly, the early knowledge productions on the 'colonised' largely came from the results of the 'colonizers' military project. Surprisingly, such knowledges remain unused so far, even uncritically, in the vastly growing 'postcolonial scholarship on Sri Lanka'. Hence, my attempt here is to excavate, somewhat limitedly, the knowledge produced about 'Adam's Peak' by the military officers of the British Ceylon.

Knowledge production of Military Officers

As a part of the territorial excavation project in newly conquered land, several military groups were sent to the Sri Pāda area to report whether the setting of this "wilderness and mountainous territory" still might be a safe place for 'enemies'. One of main purposes of such a military exercise might have been to "search" what had really been going on at Sri Pāda temple under the name of "pilgrimage". For the military to undertake those tasks, there was a considerable number of military parties exploring the 'wilderness' territory of Sri Pāda through its Southern (Sabaragamuva) and Northern (Kandy) territorial ends. Most of the military officers who participated in this excavation project later published their accounts as part of the texts that they wrote themselves on the "colonized subject". Here I use these untapped "colonial military literature" to demonstrate the early British colonial knowledge productions on Sri Pāda, or more precisely, on 'Adam's Peak'.³³⁸

The first military exploration of this kind started in the morning of 26 April, 1815 by a group of the first Ceylon Rifle Regiment of the newly established garrison at Batugedara in Ratnapura, and was led by Lieutenant Malcolm. In that military journey he received support from the Headmen of Batugedara, Dolip Nillame, who knew the Sri Pāda area that was unknown to Lieutenant Malcolm. The account of

³³⁸There are substantial military literatures that cited or described 'Adam's Peak'. But, for my analysis, I don't use all the military literature. Some of the excluded accounts are: Lieutenant Holman, R.N, who visited Sri Pāda in 1830 and published that account "Travel around the world" in 1854 vol.iii; Colonel Walker of the 61st Regiment and his wife, who visited in 1820 and their account was published in Hooker's "Companion to the Botanical Magazine" in 1835; Lieutenant De Butts "Rambles in Ceylon", 1841, 238-239; An officer, Late of the Ceylon Rifles "Ceylon: A General Description of the Island Historical, Physical Statistical. Vol.ii in 1876, 9 -23pp.

Lieutenant Malcolm is important for two reasons; it seems to be the first knowledge production on Sri Pāda by a British military officer and it also shows us how the British began to “understand” the native’s religion³³⁹.

Shortly after Lieutenant Malcolm’s expedition, another military officer explored the same route to Sri Pāda and gave an account similar to Malcolm but in different flavour.³⁴⁰ Hence, I have no intention of discussing that military excavation. However one particular military officer, Dr. John Davy’s, account on Sri Pāda is worth summarizing here³⁴¹. Davy published this account two years after finishing his short career as an army surgeon in 1819, in the British Ceylon. He published a large descriptive account about “Ceylon” in 1821 under the title *An Account of the Interior of Ceylon and Its Inhabitants with Travels in That Island*, in which he wrote a chapter on ‘Adam’s Peak’. His exploration met with the task of the ‘scientific inquiries’ on Sri Pāda where he measured and testified to the authenticity of the ‘sacred footprint’ and the temple structure. He also tested the temperature of the air and the water (in the several locations) of the sacred mountain region that includes the measuring of the height of the sacred mountain that had been measured erroneously until scientifically measured by him³⁴². For these tasks he was equipped

³³⁹ His account is appeared in J.W. Bennett’s (1843) “Ceylon and Its Capabilities: An account of its natural resources, indigenous productions, and commercial facilities”. Bennett filled several posts in the Southern Province, but his services were terminated by the government in 1827 because of accusations against him concerning financial mismanagement, and his attempts to again redress failed (cf. Harris, E.J 1994 [2001]: 60)

³⁴⁰ To read this account see the appendix of Captain Anderson’s “Wanderer in Ceylon” and Skeen, W. (1870: 341-344).

³⁴¹ John Davy lived in Ceylon between 1817 and 1819. He was born in 1790, and he studied medicine in Edinburgh, obtaining an MD degree in 1814, after which he joined the army. His subsequent career saw service in other parts of the world and an impressive list of publications (cf. Harries 1994: 57). Also see more information about him the John Davy Collection (GB0116) of Royal Institutions of GB or www.aim25.ac.uk

³⁴² He notes that “the extraordinary heights assigned by some old authors to Adam’s Peak of twelve and fifteen thousand feet are certainly erroneous. According to a rough trigonometrically measurement by the late Lieut. Col. Willerman, the Peak does not exceed 7,000 feet and thus confirming [my] barometrical estimate” (1983: 259). However, an ‘accurate’ figure was later found by a well developed scientific inquiry of the late British Ceylon as 7360 feet.

with a barometer and thermometer which were useful technologies for the emerging “scientific knowledge” about the natural world of “Ceylon”.

Such ‘rational’ narrativization of Sri Pāda in the early phase of the British Empire was an outcome of its military project of the territorial ‘explorative’ exercise. Before these military exercises, Sri Pāda was physically [through actual contact] unknown to the British colonial regime. But by 1830, Sri Pāda was a [physically] well-known place for them. In the first military exercise, the Sri Pāda temple and its ‘wilderness’ in the southern territory was explored and cleared. The first conquest was also symbolized by the firing of three heavy gunshots at the temple premises. The gunfire also indicated that Sri Pāda had come under British occupancy and authority. Similarly, through other military explorations, the sacred region was further revealed, cleared and confirmed as an area free from a potential ‘native’ rebellion against the colonial regime.

Broadly speaking, most of the British military accounts which appeared in early nineteenth century about Sri Pāda highlighted and inquired as to ‘what were the pilgrims doing at the temple?’ and ‘what did the temple look like?’ [the structure of Sri Pāda temple]. For example, the 1819 exploration provided much detail on the size of the footprint and its authenticity, and the ritual practices of both the resident Buddhist monks and the pilgrims. Generally, these explorations provided an authoritative knowledge on what Sri Pāda ‘looked like’, or, “what could be observed at Sri Pāda”, but they were not interested in searching out ‘the history of Sri Pāda’, as their fellow officials, such as administrators, would later do. In other words, these narratives provide ‘a hegemonic discourse’ on Sri Pāda in the early phase of the authoritative knowledge production on the practices of the native religions. But the constructed historiography of Sri Pāda was not prominent in the early narrativization; in fact it only became visible in much later works of the colonial historians, in the works of the colonial scholar/administrator. But, in my view, these “military accounts” provide us with a powerful marker of the particular historical moment in which a new discourse about Sri Pāda in particular, religion in general, and the overall project of British colonial knowledge production, emerged.

Production of 'systematic knowledge' under Colonial Administrators

The authoritative historical knowledges about Sri Pāda were produced after the mid-nineteenth century. Hence, we shall see how British colonial power in Ceylon produced systematically 'a discourse of Adam's peak', this time by eloquent scholars/administrators of British Ceylon. This discourse of Adam's Peak, however, was not a static one, but was subject to change when the construction of colonial knowledge about history and sociology of the colonial subject was emerging.

By middle of the nineteenth century, economic considerations, rather than purely military ones, were dominant in the government of the British Ceylon. Administrative and military authority was now separated and organized, and the mercantile capitalists and planters were important segments of the colonial bourgeoisie. As a productive outcome of this reordering project, the serious intellectual knowledge production about the colony was also institutionalised. This was after the formation of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in 1845, which was modelled on existing parent societies in London and Calcutta³⁴³. Most of the founding members came from diverse elements and all segments of the newly emerged colonial bourgeoisie. However, this newly-formed institution was predominantly dominated by the Evangelical Christian missionary scholars, as well as scholars from the colonial civil service 'scholar/administrator' in British Ceylon³⁴⁴. The determinant aims of this intellectual body were to "collect scattered rays of information possessed by different individuals" and to "encourage a literary and scientific spirit...in the island"(cf. Jeganathan 1995: 114-115). Interestingly, many of the major knowledge producers on Sri Pāda were active members of this

³⁴³ The Calcutta or Bengal Asiatic Society was founded by William Jones in 1784 where early orientalist knowledge on Ceylon was narrated and constructed. Subsequently, those 'knowledges' appeared in the highly influential journal of the Society "*Asiatick Researches*".

³⁴⁴ Example: the Wesleyan missionary scholar of Buddhism, Daniel J. Gogerly, was the first chairman of the RAS. Gogerly was born in 1792 and arrived in Sri Lanka in 1818 to supervise printing activities. He entered the ordained ministry in 1823 and served for 40 years in Sri Lanka, until his death in 1862 (see: Harris 1994: 62). Gogerly's scholarly efforts were not motivated by a sympathetic attitude toward Buddhist teachings, rather, he learned Buddhism and Pali in order to equip himself and his fellow missionaries with additional evidence for demonstrating the superiority of Christian teaching (see: Malalgoda 1976: 217).

newly established intellectual circle. This is not to say that other forms of knowledge production on Sri Pāda did not exist in the British Ceylon. Given the nature of the subject matter, my intention is to show at the discursive level how British colonial power in Ceylon produced a discourse around 'Adam's Peak'. For this purpose, here I excavate some major works on 'Adam's Peak' by one of the active members of the RAS at Ceylon branch.

For example, Sir James Emerson Tennent, influential scholar in the British Ceylon and the Colonial Secretary at the time of the inaugurating RAS, became a founding Vice-Patron of the Colombo branch of the Royal Asiatic Society³⁴⁵. His work, particularly the most famous text, *Ceylon: An Account of the Island. Physical, Historical and Topographical*, was published in two volumes in 1859³⁴⁶. As Jeganathan says, this 'text drew heavily on the intellectual resources and specialized knowledge of the members of the Society' and 'It produced an authoritative field of specific knowledge about 'Ceylon' that remained unquestioned throughout the nineteenth century', and also 'leaves no subject unexplored' (1995:115). Undoubtedly, Sri Pāda, precisely 'Adam's Peak', was among them. Tennent wrote a concise 'history' about Adam's Peak in his massive text of 'Ceylon' but this was not the final excavation on Sri Pāda in the 'regime of positivist historiographic truth'³⁴⁷. However, the complete authoritative 'historiography' on Adam's Peak was constructed in 1870 by another member of the RAS, William Skeen, who wrote nearly four hundred pages on the subject. In fact, Tennent's concise history on Adam's Peak unquestionably had affected to Skeen to produce an authoritative discourse on Adam's Peak. Hence, before examining the work of William Skeen it is worthwhile to turn to Sir Emerson Tennent.

³⁴⁵ Tennent (1804-1869) lived in Sri Lanka between 1845 to 1850 as the colonial secretary. In 1932 he entered Parliament as a member for Belfast and in 1841, he became secretary to the India Board and just before he came to Sri Lanka he was knighted. Sir Tennent was the third son of a wealthy merchant of Belfast in Ireland.

³⁴⁶ It is worthwhile to mention "Christianity in Ceylon" London: John Murray, 1850.

³⁴⁷ I use a Foucauldian formula, for according to him, "regime[s] of truth ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and the specific effects of power attached to the true" (1984:73). In other words, a "regime of truth" orders and organizes knowledge, allowing for truth claims to be made.

The scholarly narration of the Tennent's "mission" rested on two clarifications. Firstly, he encountered native religious practices, particularly around Sri Pāda, and, as other orientalist had, he labelled them "superstitious". Secondly, the account attempted to clear the name of Adam that had surrounded the religious claims of the Muslim and Catholic pilgrims. In other words, his attempt was to make a clear distinction between Christianity and the practices of "exotic" religions. This he demonstrated through an attempt to separate Evangelical "Christian Adam" from the "Islamic Adam" and the "Catholic Adam". His attempt clearly shows how British colonialism adopted different attitudes toward various religious practices. The substance of the Tennent account exemplified this colonial attitude towards "exotic" religions.

Tennent produced his narrative on Adam's Peak as a part of the description of his "official" journey from the south coastal town, Galle, to the capital city of Colombo. The major component of that journey was to visit Adam's Peak in the 'interior' region of Sabaragamuva. He tells us what he 'observed' during this special journey and quite similarly to the previous narrators, he too reported the 'difficulty of the journey' to Adam's Peak and its splendid surroundings. He summarized the 'interior' landscape of the hills in a passage, "On one hand is seen the range of purple hills, which form the mountain-zone of Kandy, and stretch as far as the eye can reach, till they are crowned by the mysterious summit of Adam's Peak"(1859 [1977]: 644). But his deliberate intention was to construct a teleological narrative on Adam's Peak. For such history—as a point of departure—he temporally accepted that the name of the sacred mountain, 'Adam's Peak', was initially derived from the Portuguese word "*Pico de Adam*". Then, he constructed his positivist historical account about Adam's Peak [1859: 642-659]. For him, in the first stage, Sri Pāda was a site where Vāddā worshiped "for ages" (the age of worship of natural object). "The veneration with which this majestic mountain has been regarded for ages, took its rise in all probability amongst the aborigines of Ceylon, whom the sublimates of nature, awaking the instinct of worship, impelled to do homage to the mountains and the sun" (ibid.). In the second stage, after 'the aborigines', 'the religious interest became concentrated on a single spot to commemorate 'some individual' identified with the national faith and thus the hollow in the lofty rock that crowns the summit was said

by the Brahmans to be the footstep of Siva, by the Buddhists of Buddha, by the Chinese of Foe, by the Gnostics of Ieu, by the Mahometans of Adam, while the Portuguese authorities were divided between the conflicting claims of St. Thomas, and the Eunuch of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia' (1859: 652).

This is how he formed or arranged lineal or chronological order in what he calls "phases". Then he wants to excavate "accuracy" of the origins of each religious faith ("superstition") related to "Adam's Peak". For him that "can be traced with curious accuracy through its successive transmitters" (1859: 653). Surprisingly, here Tennent was more keenly targetting the origins of the religious practices of Catholics and Muslims but not Buddhists and Hindus. This is because these two religious groups traced their faith to Adam and legitimised their religious practices by venerating the sacred footprint as being of "Adam". In the Catholic case, Tennent's attempt was to show that Catholics are not favour of one particular faith but they conflict with many faiths³⁴⁸. By quoting the Portuguese missionary chronicler, De Couto, Tennent emphasises that Roman Catholics are more in favour of St. Thomas than of Adam: "De Couto pleads more earnestly in favour of St. Thomas". Tennent lent the weight of De Couto's authority on this statement and was convinced that Adam's Peak is imprinted with the foot of St. Thomas, not with the foot of Adam. What really provoked Tennent's account is that the "Evangelical mind" (to borrow a phrase from Eric Stokes (1959)) rejected or ridiculed the prevailing practice of Christianity at Sri Pāda.

Having clarifying that, Tennent goes on to confront the Islamic faith of Adam. He was obscured by the origin of ~~the~~ Muslim practices at the Adam's Peak under the primal man of Christian faith. He surprisingly writes "Strange to say, the origin of the Mahometan tradition as to its being the footstep of Adam" (1859: 654). For him, quite interestingly, this shocking historical ambiguity would be only solved by referring to a Christian source. Hence, he introduced a fourth-century Christian manuscript, which contains a section called "Faithful Wisdom", and confirmed by describing it as 'the earliest recorded mention of the sacred footprint of Adam'. Having identified the

³⁴⁸ Father S.G. Perera noted that 'Tennent exaggerated the fraction of truth contained in it' (1919:8).

historical origin of the Adam sacred footprint, Tennent was keen to explain how this Christian veneration entered into the Muslim faith. Tennent blamed Gnostics because for him, they “corrupted the Christianity” by communicating the mystical veneration of Adam to the Arabic Muslim. Then Tennent made an attempt to clarify how Muslim, or Arabic, faith in Adam gets connected with the sacred footprint in Ceylon. In the religious code of Mahomet, Adam was “the first of God’s vice-regents upon earth” but the Koran makes no mention of the exact place where Adam was fallen. “In the age of Mahomet, his followers had not adopted Ceylon as the locality of the sacred footstep; but when the Arab seamen returning from India, brought home accounts of the mysterious relic on the summit [in Ceylon]”(ibid.) hence the claim of the sacred footstep as ‘Adam’ originated. Tennent concluded: “it was not till the tenth century that Ceylon became the established resort of Mahometan pilgrims” (1859: 655). In this regard, Tennent clarified the originality of the Christian veneration of the sacred footprint of Adam. It meant that Christian veneration was older, more original or more “authentic” than the Muslim veneration of Adam’s footprint. The construction of Evangelical Christian supremacy over the other religions, particularly non-Christian (Buddhism and Hinduism) religions was the major stimulating part of the process of the production of colonial knowledges in British Ceylon.

As David Scott points out, ‘Victorian English Christians in mid-nineteenth century Ceylon were more discrepant and unaccountable with the observable popular practices of the natives than the avowedly lofty and metaphysical precepts of the religious texts’ (1994:144). Scott’s point can be demonstrated through the Tennent account where he categorically labelled the religious practices at the sacred footprint as “superstition”. Not surprisingly, this was the general categorical understanding of the complex native religious practices by ‘orient scholarship’ when producing authoritative knowledge on natives practices. Tennent disrespectfully noted that ‘the indentation in the rock is a natural hollow artificially enlarged, exhibiting the rude outline of a foot about five feet long, and of proportionate breadth; but it is a test of credulity, too gross even for fanaticism to believe that the footstep is either human or divine’ (1859: 658). This was the one major problem for most of the colonial knowledge producer’s encounters when they attempted to produce the ‘true’

scientific inquiry on the sacred footprint. Tennent reproduced a 'scientific' site plan of the Temple, which was the first site plan of the temple that had been produced in 1841 by the Surveyor-General Ferguson. The temple area was mapped out and documented [its length and width as 64 feet by 45 feet] and also the sacred objects and their locations of the temple were identified, marked and recorded.

After testing the authenticity of the sacred footprint and identifying the temple site 'scientifically', he describes the ritual practices at the temple: 'it [ritual] consists of offerings, chiefly flowers of the rhododendron, presented with genuflexions, invocations, and shouts of Saadoo! (Amen!). The ceremony concludes by the striking of an ancient bell, and a draught from the sacred spring, which runs within a few feet of the summit'.(ibid.)³⁴⁹. The model of Tennent's investigation of the historical and the religious practices relating to Sri Pāda was the basis for the later knowledge producers on this subject. His work was quoted extensively in Europe and Sri Lanka particularly in the growing "historical" knowledges in the nineteenth century about the island. Hence, Tennent provides an authoritative framework in the production of a hegemonic discourse on Adam's Peak in nineteenth century British Ceylon.

Textualisation of Adam's Peak

Construction of the history of Adam's Peak within this framework is more elaborately represented in the work of William Skeen, who was an active member of the Colombo branch of the Royal Asiatic Society and wrote the most authoritative and the-comprehensive account on 'Adam's Peak' entitled *Adam's Peak: Legendary Traditional and Historic notices of The Samanala and Sri-Pada with A Descriptive Account of The Pilgrims' Route from Colombo to The Sacred Foot-Print*, published in Ceylon in 1870³⁵⁰. His text consists of ten long descriptive chapters but eight of these narrate his journey from the capital city of Colombo to Adam's Peak and the way back to Colombo. To write this lengthy account, Skeen made three 'excursions' to Adam's Peak. The first one was March 24th -31st 1869 to gather with 'Messrs.

³⁴⁹ I haven't come a cross such place or ritual oriented to the sacred spring.

³⁵⁰ This text was published to mark the royal visit of the Duke of Edinburgh to British Ceylon and it was also dedicated to him. The text was first published by W.L.H .Skeen & Co in Colombo, whereas it was republished in 1997 by the Asian Educational Services in New Delhi.

Larkum, Giles, and Deslandes, gentlemen connected with the Public Works Department'. The second was in September of the same year where he was accompanied by his son and a locally-based journalist to the Australian Journals and the third journey also took place in the same year 'during the Christmas holidays, in company of Mr. E. Gower of Colombo'(1870: 84).

His intention in these 'excursions' was clear: "There is perhaps no mountain in the world of which so widespread a knowledge exists, as Adam's Peak. Almost every traveller to, or writer on, India and the East, has alluded to, noticed, or more or less described it. But, considering the sanctity in which it is held by Buddhists, Hindus, and Mohammadans; the numerous legends and traditions connected with it; and the immense number of pilgrims who annually visit the alleged Foot-print upon its summit; it is surprising how little has been recorded by any one author, and what wide and glaring discrepancies appear in the different accounts respecting it which have from time to time been given to the world" (1870:5). Without doubt William Skeen wanted to produce a 'true' final account on Adam's Peak because the knowledges produced at that point are full of 'discrepancies', hence for him knowledge has to be produced by one author in the "regime of truth". In other words, for Skeen it is difficult to find accounts on Adam's Peak that could be treated as "truth". Hence finally, 'the truth of the Adam's Peak' must be produced or organized or ordered, that is the project William Skeen undertook in his narration. He explains the "accuracy" of his narration: "I have been scrupulously regardful of accuracy in every statement of a matter of fact; the opinions I have advanced have been adopted only after much consideration and care"(1870: 7). And he writes about the task, "My principle endeavour has been, to bring into one common focus all attainable information; and to describe more fully than has hitherto been done"(1870: 6). Not surprisingly, as with other Orientalists, Skeen's attempt was to construct an authoritative knowledge on 'every' aspect of Adam's Peak, which is lucidly expressed in the title of his text. No doubt, as Skeen says, "I trust that the work now published may be deemed worthy of a place alongside those of others whose pens in times past have illustrated the history and antiquities of Ceylon." It is quite clear that the formation of Western knowledge on Adam's Peak was itself part of the larger colonial knowledge productions on British Ceylon. As we see, the early nineteenth

century knowledge productions on Adam's Peak was largely the work of British military men, however by the middle of the century it was largely produced through the Christian colonial administrators who were much more organized as 'positivist historians' under the umbrella of the Royal Asiatic Society.

Both Tennent's and Skeen's narrations on Adam's Peak are further authorised as the "true" hegemonic accounts on the subject by extensively quoting of them not only in late nineteenth century accounts on Adam's Peak but in twentieth century scholarly writings too. For example, T.W. Rhys Davids, founder of the Pali Text Society, almost entirely depended on Tennent's and Skeen's narrations when he introduced Adam's Peak in his work "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics" in 1925³⁵¹. This shows how their work is immensely influential—in 'knowledge production'—on Adam's Peak. Indeed a major element of both Tennent's and Skeen's descriptive projects was the identification of Adam's Peak as an important site for the British colonial regime.

Orientalists' attempt to produce 'scientific rational knowledge' on Adam's Peak can't be understood in isolation from their attitudes towards "natives" religious practices. As we have seen, the Portuguese discourse on Adam's Peak denied rather than rejected the existing religious practices of Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims as "heathen" or "idolatry", and this rejection was drawn on to assimilate, or more precisely "convert", a group of "natives" into Catholicism through means of "power" or introducing new Catholic "connotations" to the sacred sites. However, the Dutch and British discourses (particularly the nineteenth century British orientalist, Christian missionaries and colonial administrators;) objectified the practices of the native's religions but adopted different attitudes toward them while treating them as "exotic" religions. This is partly because the orientalist had seen or defined existing religious beliefs and practices as "corrupt" or "superstition", hence for them "corrupt" practices were incommensurable with the "truth" of Christianity, or more correctly, normative Victorian ideas and values of the British Empire. In the case of Adam's Peak, such ambivalence is readily apparent, and further it is demonstrated

³⁵¹ See pages 87-88.

that the orientalist rejected rather criticized or ridiculed the religious practices at Sri Pāda as “superstition”. Of course, for example, European interpretations of the Buddhist tradition as shaped by the rationalistic and anti-ritualistic ethos alluded to above became highly influential in nineteenth century Buddhist revivalism in the country (see Malalgoda 1976; Bond 1988; Obeyesekere 1976). Surely this reformative moment took Christian criticisms seriously and has left little room for the “corrupt” “village Buddhism” or its ritual practices such as *bali*, *yak tovil* (‘demonism’) and astrology in the newly emerged urbanized, westernised middle class Buddhism what has been call by Obeyesekere “Protestant Buddhism”³⁵². But, interestingly, some of the most influential figures of nineteenth century Buddhist revival did not reject the validity and the importance of the “village Buddhist” pilgrimage practices. Rather, some Buddhist reformers, such as Anagarika Dharmapala (1864-1933) and Valisinghe Harishchandra, fought against the governments of British India and British Ceylon to regain the historical pilgrimage sites under Buddhist control and made use of them to enhance Buddhist nationalism (see Nissan 1989)³⁵³. Hence, the orientalist discursive rejections could not effectively influence or alter the existing pilgrimage practices of Sri Pāda in particular, or whole pilgrimage practices in the country in general³⁵⁴. Similarly, discursive criticism did not adversely affect the existing diverse religious cohabitants at Sri Pāda. This religious cohabitancy is clearly demonstrated in some of the late colonial knowledge production that I would like to label as “tolerance discourse”. Such tolerance discourse is, for example, clearly visible in a book written by a

³⁵² This new religion is also labelled as “Buddhist modernism” (e.g., Seneviratne 1999) or “Neo-Buddhism”; “colonized Buddhism”(e.g. Spencer 1990)

³⁵³ For a comprehensive analysis about the life and the work of Dharmapala (see Seneviratne 1999: 25 – 55). Dharmapala was a dedicated promoter of relic devotion and Buddhist pilgrimage, and in 1891 he founded the Maha Bodhi Society as a vehicle for restoring the ancient Buddhist pilgrimage centres in India. Harishchandra was a well-known disciple of Dharmapala and in 1899 established a branch of the Maha Bodhi Society in Anuradhapura and began the protest movement to regain Anuradhapura under Buddhist control-(see Nissan 1985).

³⁵⁴ The rejection not only came from the orientalist but also from the hard line Buddhist reformers like American theosophist Henry Steel Olcott. Dharmapala broke with Olcott in 1904 because Olcott showed disrespect toward the relic of the Buddha’s tooth, one of the most sacred sites of the Buddhist pilgrims (Obeyesekere 1976: 239).

colonial writer, John Still in 1930. Under the separate chapter, title of “A Holy Mountain”, he writes

[A]mong the pilgrims I have seen people of half a dozen races, with as many languages, and at least four distinct religions beside many sects...the tolerance of the pilgrims seemed a thing that might well have been studied by Western ecclesiastics with honour and amazement, perhaps even in shame. I mentioned this tolerance once to a bishop, and was told it was a sign of weakness of faith; persecution. I suppose, is a sign of strength ... (15-37).

Similarly Sir Vivian Majendie who visited Sri Pāda on January 1, 1896 reported that ‘In the height of the pilgrim season the scene is most extraordinary-- men, women, old and young, some almost decrepit, some who actually die on the way and many who have to be pulled or carried up--people from all over India, from China, from Japan, from Burmah, from Siam, from Ceylon, from Africa – from all the seats of the three great religions...’ (A Gazetteer: xi). Even, Sir Emerson Tennent reports that ‘the Buddhists are the guardians of the Sri-pada, around this object of common adoration the devotees of all races meet, not in furious contention like the Latins and Greeks at the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem, but in pious appreciation of the one solitary object on which they can unite in peaceful worship’ (1859:137). This historically viewed religious and ethnic co-existence at Sri Pāda, as I have argued in this thesis, began to fade with concurrent emergence of dominant forms of Sinhala Buddhist nationalism in postcolonial Sri Lanka.

But in general, the totalising diverse religious practices of the natives as “heathen” or non-Christian under the authoritative knowledge production of three hegemonic colonisers, would not support religious multiplicity at Sri Pāda; rather discursive constructions would eventually undermine it. This is the process by which “Adam’s Peak” came to be systematically identified and indeed constituted in European discourses in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Appendix IV

Temple disputes in 'Late colonial governmentality' (1911-1948)

After the death of Hikkaduve Sumangala in 1911 the dispute surrounding the appointment of chief priest escalated. Most disputes emerged around issues of nomination, preparing of voting lists and the holding of elections. These were the new (democratic) technologies that had been introduced into the selection of chief priesthood of Sri Pāda temple by the colonial state from 1860. Since then, as we shall see in a moment, each and every election for appointing a chief priesthood was dominated and complicated by these issues. The monks and the lay elites in the Sabaragamuva were equally divided when provoked by those issues. Another obvious reason for the escalation of disputes in the first half of the twentieth century is the arrival of Hikkaduve's pupils as new contenders for the chief priesthood. Most of them held high administrative positions in the Colombo based monastic college, Vidyodaya, which was founded by Hikkaduve himself in 1873³⁵⁵. I refer to them as "Colombo monks". The arrival of "Colombo monks" as new contenders to the higher ecclesiastical positions in the province (chief priests of Sri Pāda temple and the Province of Sabaragamuva) was also a result of 'archaic' rivalry between the Kandyan monks and Sabaragamuva monks of the Malvatta chapter. For example: in 1910, just few months before the death of Hikkaduve Sumangala, one of his chief pupils, Mahagoda Ñānesvara³⁵⁶ was appointed as the Chief Priest of Sabaragamuva by Malvatta Sangha council of Kandy (*Maha Kāraka Sangha Sabāhva*)³⁵⁷. Soon after the death of Hikkaduve the Kandy monks made an announcement that they had elected Tibbotuwawe Sri Siddarta Sumangala, the Chief Priest of Malvatta chapter, as new Chief Priest for Sri Pāda temple. His name was sent to the Government Agent of Central Province to receive government recognition but the government did not recognise it due to opposition from the Sabaragamuva monks³⁵⁸. On 3rd December

³⁵⁵ See Seneviratne for detail about this institution and its programmes (1999:56-129).

³⁵⁶ He was a chief pupil of Hikkaduve and after the death of Hikkaduve, became Principle of the most prestigious Viddodaya monastic college in Colombo.

³⁵⁷ I generally called them "Kandyan Monk".

³⁵⁸ A letter to GA Central Province on 26th May 1911-SLNA 45/2964.

1911 the Sabaragamuva monks called a meeting with the intention to select their own monk, Paragala Sobita. But in opposition to that, a separate meeting was called on 4th December by the chief priest of Sabaragamuva province, Mahagoda Ñānesvara, who was fully backed by the Kandyan monks. In this meeting, unexpectedly, a critic of Kandyan monks, Bedigama Ratanapala³⁵⁹, the chief pupil of the former chief priest of Sabaragamuva, Siyabalakatuwe Attadassi, was elected with the majority of votes (35) of the participating monks.³⁶⁰ But his appointment ended up unsuccessful when the objection was made by the chief priest of Sabaragamuva on the grounds of the eligibility of some monks who had voted for Bedigama at that election³⁶¹. Kandyan monks realised that there had been serious opposition developing against their engagement in the appointment of chief priesthood of the Sri Pāda temple. Hence, Kandy monks [Malvatta Sangha council] wrote a long letter to the Governor, Sir Hugh Clifford, to express that their rights over recommendation for the chief priests not only to Sri Pāda but also to other major Buddhist temples come under their institutional body. They argued in the letter that such authority was given them by the Kandyan kings and later under the Kandyan convention of the British colonial state. In response, the Colonial government invited the GA of Central province, Mr. C. S. Vaughan to draw up a negotiated settlement on the issue of chief priesthood of Sri Pāda temple. In the settlement process Vaughan was assisted by some lay elites in the both provinces. On 7th December 1911 a settlement (popularly known as the “Vaughan settlement”) was announced but none of the Sabaragamuwa monks signed the agreement. However, the chief monk of Malvatta in Kandy and his two deputies signed the agreement before the GA of Central Province³⁶². Under this unilateral settlement Kandyan monks (Malvatta Sangha Council) were given substantial powers to intervene in the appointment of chief priesthood of Sri Pāda temple.

³⁵⁹ He was a controversial monk and had openly criticized the authority of Malvatta monks in Kandy and as a result his membership of the Malvatta Chapter was temporally ceased. At the time of the contestation for Sri Pāda office, he was the Chief Principle of a popular monastic college, Maha Mantinda, in the Southern coastal city of Matara (See Panamwela Rahula: ‘*Badigama Nahimiyo: jivana charitaya ha prabanda*’. No date).

³⁶⁰ GA diaries SLNA 45/345

³⁶¹ Ñānavimala, K., 1975: 194.

³⁶² Charles Taldena, J.H. Meedeniya and L.D Nugawela Ratamahatmayas were the witness of this agreement.

The summary of the settlement is as follows. Under the settlement the chief priest appointed by the Sangha Council of Kandy for the Sabaragamuva Province should hold the election for the chief priesthood for Sri Pāda temple at the suitable place in the District of Ratnapura. Before such election the list of the monks who qualified for voting should be sent to the chief priest (Mahanāyaka) at Kandy for his recommendation and then only a voting list could be printed by the chief priest of the province. However, if a priest with the necessary qualifications attended the election his name would be added to the list of voters after inquiry into his claims. This had to be done by the provincial chief monk himself. It was also agreed that the election should be conducted by ballot. After the election the signatures of those present at the election in favour of the particular candidate should be sent to Kandy; they should be carefully examined by the Malvatta Sangha Council and the candidate for whom a majority of votes had been given would be duly appointed chief monk of Sri Pāda temple. The appointment later would be issued by the Malvatta Sangha Council and the Government was to be informed about such appointment.³⁶³

This agreement was important for Kandy monks because it gave them substantial authority and to the chief priest of Sabaragamuva who was usually appointed by them as controller of ecclesiastical affairs in the Sabaragamuva province. It was under this agreement that a fresh election was held on 21st January 1912 at which Paragala Sobita defeated his former contender, Bedigama Ratanapala with considerable support of a group of elites (*radala*) in the Province. Sadly, Paragala died ten months after his appointment. In this unexpected situation, the Kandy monks issued a notice to the Sabaragamuva monk of Malvatta to prepare for the election to appoint a successor to Paragala Sobita. Moreover, they were asked to send the names of the potentials candidates to Kandy before the 25th of December 1912.³⁶⁴ The Sabaragamuva monks began to complain about this announcement as it clearly violated the “Vaughan Agreement”. They argued that under the Agreement, the Sangha Council had no power to call upon such election and it is the duty of the chief

³⁶³ New Law Reports Vol.LVIII, 1956:80.

³⁶⁴ SLNA 45/2964.

monk of Sabaragamuva Province. This act of the Sangha Council was brought to the attention of the GA Sabaragamuva by a leading monk of the Sabaragamuva, Urapola Ratanajothi, the founder of *abhayaaraja* monk lineage in Ratnapura (more on him later). GA Sabaragamuva brought this matter before the GA Central Province, Mr. Vaughan, the founder of the Agreement. The Vaughan inquiry on the controversy found that the Sangha Council had issued such a notice because the chief monk of Sabaragamuva Province had himself declared that he would be contested for the chief priesthood for Sri Pāda temple. Another reason he found on the controversial announcement was that the Sangha Council wanted to immediately fill the vacancy before the forthcoming of pilgrimage season.³⁶⁵ However, these excuses did not make a difference. Apparently, the Colonial Secretary sent a letter to the GA Central Province and asked him to influence a withdrawal of the notice and also to cancel the election proposed by the Malvatta Sangha Council.³⁶⁶ The Sangha Council issued a fresh notice under the name of chief priest of Malvatta chapter, Tibbatuwawe Sri Sumangala, mentioning that the fresh election should be held under the chairmanship of Sabaragamuva chief monk, Mahagoda Ñanesvara or a person who would be nominated by the GA Sabaragamuva.³⁶⁷ The two GAs of both provinces and the monks of the Sangha Council in Kandy were favoured to appoint J.H. Meedeniya, Ratamahatmaya of Ruwanwella division of Kegalle district in the province of Sabaragamuva; also a member of the “Vaughan Agreement”, as the chairman of the forthcoming election³⁶⁸. Two reputable monks, one from Sabaragamuva (T. Ratanapla) and other from outside the Sabaragamuva (Rambukpota Paññasara) came

³⁶⁵ A letter from GA Central Province to GA Sabaragamuva on 7-12-1912: SLNA 45/2964.

³⁶⁶ SLNA 45/2964: a letter on 11-12-1912

³⁶⁷ Ibid.-notice issued on 12-12-1912

³⁶⁸ Meedeniya was honoured successively with the title of Dissava and Adigar though he did not belong to one of the top radala families, and later was nominated to the Legislative Council as one of the two Kandyan members. His elder daughter married Sir Francis Molamure of Balangoda, an advocate, who became Speaker of the State Council and the House of Representative and his second daughter married D.R. Wijewardene, a member of the low-country wealthiest family and the founder of Lake House Press (See: Hulugalle 1960: 37-41). And Meyer has traced his active involvement in landgrabbing under the colonial land policy in the Kegalle District of Sabaragamuva (1982: 341-342).

forward as contenders³⁶⁹. Between the two contenders, Rambukpota was most powerful because he came from an aristocratic family in the Uva Province which had strong connections with the Sabaragamuva aristocrats' families through marriage alliances, and he was also a pupil of Hikkaduve Sumangala, former chief monk of Sri Pāda, at the Vidyodaya monastic college³⁷⁰. At the time he made an application for the chief priestship of Sri Pāda temple, he held the post of principle of the Godagedara monastic school near Colombo which was indirectly patronized by the well-known low country Bandaranaike family³⁷¹. In this contestation Rambukpota mobilised all the support of the elite families in the province except the Mahavalatenna family, another powerful family that built marriage alliances with Kandyan aristocratic families and latter with wealthy families of the low country like Bandaranaike³⁷².

S.D. Mahavalatenna supported the candidature of Ratanapala but soon realised that he was not strong enough to defeat Rambukpota. Later on Ratanapala withdrew his nomination from the contest, eventually, and the chief monk of Sabaragamuva, Mahagoda Ñānesvara was nominated as the new contender against Rambukpota. Interestingly, both Mahagoda Ñānesvara and Rambukpota happened to be the pupils of Hikkaduve Sumangala at the Vidyodaya monastic college in Colombo. Both competitors were equally educated and fully supported by the internally divided elite and the monk community of the Province. The existing divisions among the Sabaragamuva elites had further exacerbated in the eve of the Rambukpota and Ñānesvara contestation for Sri Pāda chief priestship that was well summarized in the diaries of GA Sabaragamuva in 1913:

They had held a preliminary meeting of Chiefs in the morning as advised by me. Mahavalatenna and Gunasekere supported Ñānesvara and Maduwanwela,

³⁶⁹ See Ñānavimala 1976: 196-198.

³⁷⁰ One of two daughters of Iddamalgoda was married to the Rambukpota family in the Uva province who later became a Ratamahatmaya of Navadun korale in the Sabaragamuva, and the second daughter was married to the Elapatha family.

³⁷¹ Solomon Dias Bandaranaike, Maha Mudaliyar had also backed him in this election (Brief conversation with Buddha Rakkitha of Uttaramula monastic school at Godagedara, Aug. 21, 2002).

³⁷² Spencer has given a comprehensive history about this family (see 1985: chapter 3).

Kalawane, Elapata, Ekneligoda, Muttettuwegama and the Dissava supported Rambukpota. Meedeniya seated as peacemaker.

It was suggested that the two rivals priests Rambukpota and Ñanesvara should retire and that a third candidate should be chosen. The candidates appeared to be willing, but Mahavalatenne would not consent to allow Ñanesvara to be ousted and said that he would rather have his throat cut. Mahavalatenne in addressing the other Chiefs said that in the eyes of Ceylon and of the world the Chiefs would lay themselves open to the charge that they were using their influence to secure the appointment of their own relative, if they supported Rambukpota, that, if they did so, they could no longer be classed in the Radala peruwa in his opinion and that they, their families and their children's' children would be consigned to the fiery hell awaiting unfaithful Buddhists. This he expressed as the opinion of a dying man as he was told that he had no more than six months to live³⁷³. The other Chiefs refused to allow them to be dominated over by Mahavalatenne or to be preached at by him, Mahawalatenne had wound up his remarks by banging the table hard with his fist. They argued whether the High Priest ought to live within Sabaragamuva, or not and came to the conclusion that it was not absolutely necessary in these days of motorcars. Finally they decided to abide by the votes³⁷⁴

In his diary entries for the same year GA of Sabaragamuva stated

‘[T]here were pressing matters nearer home. Rival priests in the field and rival Ratemahatmayas (Chiefs) backing them. It is of course a matter of common knowledge that there has been a spilt among the Chiefs; Kalawane and Gunasekera have fallen out. Maduwanwela wanted to know what a low-country outsider like Gunasekara was doing in a Kandyan Province. Mahawalatenne gave mortal offence to Kalawane at the Governor's reception at Ratnapura [...]. There have been other troubles between the Ekneligoda cum Ellawala with the rest. It is a complicated business. I gathered from

³⁷³ But he died in September 1916. SLNA 45/336

³⁷⁴ SLNA 45/345.

Meedeniya that Maduwanwela, Ekneligoda and Muttettuwegama, reinforced by the Iddamalgoda Kumarihami³⁷⁵, were supporting Rambukpota's candidature. Elapata, though he is a son-in-law of Iddamalgoda Kumarihami, is trying to preserve a neutral attitude. Gunasekara champions Ñanesvara, many of his priests signed for Bedigama [Ratanapala] in the last election...³⁷⁶

It was under this bitter division and tension that a notice was issued to call a meeting on Sunday the 12th of January at 2.00 p.m. by Ñanesvara as the Chief Priest of Sabaragamuva Province with an approval of GA and the Malvatta Sangha Council³⁷⁷. But this meeting was broken up by the faction against Ñanesvara who accused him of allowing some monks who were not eligible to cast their vote in the election. When the pressure came Ñanesvara left the meeting after the announcement of its postponement. However, the opposition party, which was supporting Rambukpota, had resummoned the meeting and unanimously selected Rambukpota as the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple. But Ñanesvara made numerous objections on this appointment by sending letter after letter to the GA Sabaragamuva. One such objection that was brought to the attention on the GA was against allowing *samanera* or novice monks to cast their vote at what Ñanesvara called "unauthorised meetings". A similar objection was also made separately by the chief priest of Malvatta in Kandy. Contrary to those claims, Elapata, the chief local administrator of the area reported to the GA that the supporters of Ñanesvara (both from the low country and in the province) had obstructed and threatened monks who were intended to attend the meeting on the day³⁷⁸. However, Ñanesvara went further and recalled a fresh meeting on 9th of February at 2.00 p.m at the Ratnapura Dharmasala ("Hall of the Doctrine")³⁷⁹. Prior to this meeting Ñanesvara issued a list of eligible monks who

³⁷⁵ Iddamalgoda had one daughter and she got married to—(Rambukpota Ratamahatmaya)—the Rambukpota family at Badulla in the Uva Province. They lived with her father at the Palmadulla Walauwa and had four daughters (AR 1885:144).

³⁷⁶ SLNA 45/345.

³⁷⁷ SLNA 45/2964

³⁷⁸ GA dairies SLNA 45/333.

³⁷⁹ Prior to this notice he informed GA about the postponement and in the same letter he made a suggestion to GA to direct the District Committee of the Buddhist temporalities to appoint officers to take charge of during the forthcoming pilgrimage season - SLNA 45/2964.

could vote in the coming meeting. In that list names of novices (*samanera*) and monks who did not belong to Vehālle lineage were not included³⁸⁰. Rambukpota's supporters were strongly opposed to Ñānesvara's decision, particularly the exclusion of the name of Rambukpot's leading supporter, Urapola Ratanajothi of Abhayaraja lineage. Ñānesvara made an announcement that he took the decision based on the petition he had received signed by twenty monks³⁸¹. By this time the relationship between Ñānesvara and the Kandyan monks did not seem to be in friendly terms. They were not convinced by the way in which Ñānesvara used his power as the chief priest of Sabaragamuva particularly in the preparation of the voting list for his favour. Interestingly, the Kandyan Sangha Council passed a new resolution that allowed voting rights for novice or under ordinate monks who had passed seven years with robes. Moreover, they also created a new position, deputy chief priest or *anunāyaka*, for the Sabaragamuva province and appointed Urapola Ratanajothi to that office. No doubt the latter decision would have further undermined the Ñānesvara position as the chief priest of the province. Needless to say, Ñānesvara refused to recognise this new appointment.³⁸² Meedeniya Ratamahatmaya, who acted as a negotiator in this dispute, tried to negotiate with both rival parties but Ñānesvara declared that he and his supporters would not participate in the forthcoming meeting. However, both Meedeniya and GA Sabaragamuva agreed to a new arrangement made by the Kandy monks and tried to persuade Ñānesvara to stick to the new rule. But Ñānesvara was not happy with this new rule and urged the GA to postpone the meeting that he himself had announced. But GA strongly advised him to carry out the meeting as scheduled³⁸³. The meeting went ahead as planned but under much tension, resentment and disagreement. The lay elites in the province were bitterly

³⁸⁰ GA Sabaragamuva reported that Ñānesvara proceeded several tests to find the novices (most of them came from a remote part, Kolonna Korale, of the Province). Even just before the commencement of the election Ñānissara wanted stop novice voting and for that he tested novices by asking some questions on their age, when and where they became monk and also a few questions on religion (Buddhism). If they failed to answer those questions, they were disqualified and were asked to stand out -SLNA 45/ 2964.

³⁸¹ SLNA 45/2964.

³⁸² GA dairies SLNA 45/333

³⁸³ *ibid.*

divided in this contestation for Sri Pāda chief priestship. It is worth-quoting what GA had reported about this controversial meeting:

From 2 p. m to midnight they [mainly monks and lay elites] sat upon the floor of the pirivena [monastic school] without food or water. A very aged priest was elected as President. We knew nothing about the duties of a President. There was considerable disorder, both sides arguing at the same time about the qualifications of the priests who had to vote, but they respected Meedeniya's decisions on the point. The voting went at first in favour of Ñānesvara. Twenty-one priests signed in his register to five in Rambukpota's register. The Kolonna Korele [monks] voted solid and without hesitation registered 21 votes for Rambukpota. The excitement and confusion increased. Two priests, who were not registered as present at the beginning of the meeting, turned up and were allowed to vote for Ñānesvara. At midnight the poll stood at 35 signatures for each candidate. Then the supporters of Rambukpota wished to record the vote of the Godakawela priest, who had also come late. At this the Secretaries, who favoured Ñānesvara and all Ñānesvara's supporters including Mahawalatenne and Gunasekera got up, protested and withdrew and the meeting broke up in hopeless confusion. The registers were unsigned by the Secretaries, the president disappeared and the result was a fiasco³⁸⁴.

Soon after the collapse of this meeting, GA suggested another meeting and at that meeting he wanted to see voters cast their vote through the ballot. Including this new suggestion, a report of the unsuccessful meeting was sent to the Malvatta Sangha Council through the GA of Central Province for their consideration. The report disclosed that a dispute had basically arisen over the matter relating to qualification and disqualification of certain monks in the voting. In the report the GA blamed the presiding chief monk, Ñānesvara, because he had gone beyond considering whether monks had the minimum qualifications required to cast their vote at the meeting, and had disqualified twenty monks. The GA asked the Sangha Council to inquire into the question of the right of these disqualified monks and make a decision on whether the

³⁸⁴ SLNA 45/345

election should stand or be set aside. The Kandy Sangha Council made a reply to the GA's report on 11th March 1913 and expressed their unwillingness to drag this issue any further, recommended Rambukpota Paññasara as a newly elected chief priest for Sri Pāda temple and asked the GA to officially accepted their recommendation.³⁸⁵ The GA was happy about the recommendation and officially recognized Rambukpota Paññasara as the "Chief Priest of Adam's Peak"³⁸⁶. He functioned in Sri Pāda office until he died on 12th February 1925.

The appointment of his successor did not take place until 1954. During the intermittent period different issues were raised, contested and battled out around the appointment of chief monk of Sri Pāda temple and under such circumstances the management of Sri Pāda temple affairs remained in the hands of lay elites. As we have seen so far, under Rambukpota's appointment two interesting things had happened. The first one is that, like monks, the lay elites were bitterly divided and openly supported their candidates to ensure they won. Mostly elites were supported. Secondly, the cordial relationship between Kandy monks and the chief priest of Sabaragamuva, Ñanesvara, seemed to turn unfriendly. Hence, in the next appointment the Kandy monks did not seek the support of Ñanesvara. Instead they worked out a different strategy.

Soon after the demise of Rambukpota, surprisingly, the Kandyan monks nominated the great grand nephew of late Vālivita Saranamkara (1698-1778) of Malvatta temple, Saranamkara (III) as the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple. For such nomination, Saranamkara argued that he was the only sole surviving pupillary descendent of Sangharaja Vālivita Saranamkara, hence he had the unquestionable authority to hold office at Sri Pāda. This claim was quickly accepted by the Malvatta Sangha Council who recommended his name to government. However, Sabaragamuva monks of the Malvatta chapter were undividedly opposed to such an appointment and they themselves claimed that 'all priests of the Malvatta Branch of

³⁸⁵ SLNA 45/2964

³⁸⁶ The Paragala Somananda, a pupil of former chief monk was nominated as the deputy chief monk of Sri Pāda under Rambukpota.

the Siam sect are pupils of Vālivita Saranamkara Swami and that it has been the custom for those pupils who reside in Ratnapura District to elect one of their member to the High Priesthood.³⁸⁷ Moreover, they blamed Malvatta Sangha Council that they had breached 'the Vaughan Convention' which was signed in 1911. Under that Convention Kandy monks did not have the power of either appointing or nominating a monk to Sri Pāda chief priestship. Instead, sticking to 'the Vaughan Convention', the colonial government appointed the joint committee comprising of nine aristocrats from both provinces to settle the issue. On 10th October 1926, the joint committee consisting of J. H. Meedeniya (Chairman, Sabaragamuva), P. B. Dissanayaka (Secretary, DBTC of Kandy), P. B. Nugawela, (*Diyawadana Nilame* of the temple of Tooth relic), J.C. Ratwatte (*Dissawa* of Kandy), U. B. Galagoda (*Basnāyaka Nilame* of Kandy Nata Dewale), E.A. Elapata (*Dissawa* of Sabaragamuva), P.B. Muttettuwagama (DBTC of Ratnapura), Barnes Ratwatte (DBTC of Balangoda) and H.A.Goonasekera met at Ratnapura. Five leading monks from the Malvatta Sangha Council and the Sabaragamuva also participated. At that meeting they all arrived at the following set of resolutions: the chief monk of Sri Pāda was to be elected by the majority of votes of the monks of the Malvatta chapter of the Siyam Nikāya residing in the Ratnapura District and such election would be approved and a certificate of recognition be issued to such elected monk by the Sangha council of the Malvatta. The notice convening the meeting of the election of Sri Pāda chief priestship was to be signed by either the Dissava of Sabaragamuva and the President of the Ratnapura DBTC or the chief monk of Sabaragamuva and the election should be held in the presence of three lay chiefs of the DBTC of Ratnapura and should be presided by the chief monk of the Sabaragamuva. The committee also decided to give an annual grant (Rs.1000) from the revenue of Sri Pāda temple to the claimant, Vālivita Saranamkara (III) at the Sangharaja Temple in Kandy. That grant should be spent over the maintenance, education and proper repairs of the Sangharaja Temple³⁸⁸. Though the joint committee decisions were accepted by the Colonial state and it ordered that fresh elections be conducted under those conditions, the dispute remained unsolved.

³⁸⁷ SLNA 45/2966.

³⁸⁸ *ibid.*

Dispute between Dhammānanda and Ratanajothi

After the joint committee decisions, however, several elections took place but none of them succeeded to appoint the proper chief monk for Sri Pāda temple. By 1931 the chief priest (Mahanāyaka) of Malvatta wrote to the Colonial Secretary and reminded him ‘although subsequently in 1926 a Committee passed certain resolutions, none of them has so far been acted upon’.³⁸⁹ Generally speaking during this period two rival groups of monks emerged around the contestation for Sri Pāda chief priestship. Urapola Ratanajothi and Morontuduve ã gave the leadership to these two factions of monks. Urapola Ratanajothi was a forefront supporter of Rambukpota’s election campaign and though he was not a member of so called ‘Vehālle monks lineage (*sangha paramparāva*)’ he was able to win hearts and minds of the group of influential monks and lay elites of Ratnapura as a reputed Pali and Sanskrit scholar, preacher and popular monastic teacher. He resided at *Saddharmalankara* monastic school popularly known as ‘Dharmasala’³⁹⁰ (lit. “Hall of the Doctrine”) Pirivena in Ratnapura, which he founded in 1904. Morontuduve Dhammānanda was a pupil of Rambukpota’s contender, Mahagoda Ñānesvara and a well-known preacher and scholar, based at Vidyodaya monastic college in Colombo. Though his teacher, Ñānesvara, had not maintained a good relationship with the Malvatta monks in the latter part of his career, Dhammānanda could establish a loyal relationship with the high-ranking monks of the Malvatta. As a result, in 1928 he was appointed to succeed his teacher’s position as the chief monk of Sabaragamuva. The appointment of Dhammānanda became a controversial one. Monks who supported Ratanajothi were not quite convinced with this appointment and eventually wrote to the GA Sabaragamuva to express their dissatisfaction in such a high position being held by an ‘outsider’ to the Province. They went on to explain: We have heard that the chief

³⁸⁹ Administration Reports 1935:c20.

³⁹⁰ According to history of the temple, it was built around 1885 by a local chieftain, William Ellawala, a Christian who later became a Buddhist under the influence of Hikkaduve Sumangala to whom Ellawala donated this temple or “Hall of the Doctrine”. Later Hikkaduve sent Urapola Ratanajothi, one of his students at the Vidyodaya to take up residence at Dharma Sala. Building “Dharma Sala” seems to me much more common to this particular period. For instance, H.L. Seneviratne describes a similar “Hall of the Doctrine” located in Bambalapitya, Colombo and was charged with the best student of Hikkaduve, Palane Vajiranana, and the place was subsequently known as Vajirarama (1999: 53)

High Priestship of Sabaragamuva has been conferred on a junior Buddhist Priest of Colombo who has no connection whatever with this Province. If it is so, it is an unjust appointment. Therefore we do not accept him as our High Priest....There is no power for a High Priest who is not recognized by us to convene a meeting for the selection of a High Priest who is a stranger to this Province and who knows nothing concerning the High Priestship of Adam's Peak, is unable to perform the function legally. It can only be done by Urapola Sri Ratanajothi High Priest who is holding the office of second High Priest of this Province for over 15 years.³⁹¹

Though Dhammānanda was young and new to the District he was able to create a substantial power base among the Malvatta monks in the District partly through his connection to Vehālle lineage (*Vehālle Sangha paramparāva*) and mostly through the power he gained as chief monk of the Province of Sabaragamuva. As the deputy chief monk (*anunāyaka*) of the Province, Urapola Ratanajothi had also maintained considerable influence over the Sabaragamuva monks but he was not in good relations with the Malvatta monks at that time.

In 1928 Ratanajothi was able to form a '*Sri Pāda pālaka sangha sabha*' (Sangha Council for Managing Sri Pāda affairs), which was also backed by some influential lay elites of the Province.³⁹² This was basically a committee formed under the chairmanship of Ratanajothi by aiming to win Sri Pāda priestship in the forthcoming election. Urapola and Dhammānanda were ready to contest for the chief priestship of Sri Pāda temple. Before that the compilation of the list of voters preparatory to the election was key to them. With the power assigned to Ratanajothi as the deputy chief monk of the province he forwarded a separate voting list to the Mahanāyaka at Malvatta. Before finalizing the Ratanajothi's voting list there was an election held on 25th March 1926 at the Delgamuva temple, Kuruvita (Ratnapura) by a group of "Vehālle monks" in which they elected Paragala Somananda who had served as the deputy (*anunāyaka*) to the former chief monk of Sri Pāda temple³⁹³. The Paragala

³⁹¹ SLNA 45/2965

³⁹² SLNA 45/2966

³⁹³ SLNA37/957

selection was announced through the local newspaper and was nearly recognised by the government as the properly elected chief monk for Sri Pāda temple³⁹⁴.

However, Ratanajothi's strong objection provoked him to halt the appointment and he strongly emphasised that such election had been held without informing either the DBTCs of Ratnapura or Balangoda.³⁹⁵ Meanwhile, GA Sabaragamuva wrote to the Mahanāyaka at Kandy and suggested holding a fresh election based on Ratanajothi's voting list. But no election was held that year because a disagreement arose with Ratanajothi's voting list. Even in 1931 there still seemed—to have been some difficulty about the preparation of the list of voters. A monk whose name was not in the voting list wrote to Morontuduve Dhammānanda. Under such a request of the monks and also the authority given him as the chief monk of Sabaragamuva, Dhammānanda began to prepare a fresh voting list against which another was prepared by Ratanajothi.

Before he completed his voting list, on 1st November 1931, the Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance came into operation. It contained provisions for the compulsory registration of Buddhist monks. According to new technological modality of the Colonial state applications for registration had to be sent in duplicate to the Register-General, countersigned by the Mahanāyaka or Provincial chief monk of the respective Nikāya. Under this Ordinance Ratanajothi's influence on registration of monks seemed to become very limited. As a provincial chief monk, Dhammānanda had a full legal right to monk's registration in the Province and was eventually endorsed by Mahanāyaka and the Sangha Council of Malvatta at Kandy. While Dhammānanda was preparing the new register of the monks of Malvatta chapter in Ratnapura District, Ratanajothi called a meeting of "*Sri Pāda Palaka Sangha Sabhawa*" on 25th February, 1931 to discuss matters relating to the Dhammānanda position in the province and his 'favourably prepared voting list'. In this meeting several resolutions were unanimously passed against Dhammānanda and some of them are worth a mention here: To inform Mahanāyaka of Malvatta and GA

³⁹⁴ Daily News 26/03/1926.

³⁹⁵ SLNA45/2966. Paragala and his supporters were joined latter with the Dhammananda's camp

Ratnapura that Dhammānanda has prepared 'incomplete' (*asampurna*) voting list. The monks of this region (Ratnapura) should not vote for 'an outsider' in an election for the incumbency of Sri Pāda and also to protest at the inclusion of Dhammānanda's name in the voting list at him being 'non-resident in the District'³⁹⁶.

Shortly after that meeting, they issued a notice calling another meeting to elect the chief monk for Sri Pāda temple. However, Mahanāyaka of Malvatta was opposed to calling upon such meeting without their permission, named it as an "unauthorised gathering" and telegraphed Government Agents in Ratnapura to cancel the meeting³⁹⁷. And even he further issued a press notice, which appeared in an issue of the *Dinamina* Newspaper, stating that it was the decision of the Maha Kāraka Sangha Sabha (Supreme Sangha Council) not to recognize the election of Ratanajothi.³⁹⁸ But, interestingly, immediately after the Mahanāyaka's press notice two anunāyaka's (deputy chief monks) of the Sangha Sabha issued an announcement "We are quite ignorant of the letter published in yesterday's "Dinamina" by the Mahanāyaka Thero of Malvatta on the Sri Pāda Nayaka election meeting".³⁹⁹ It seemed that the Sangha Council had held two different opinions on the Ratanajothi selection as the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple.

According to the Government Agent, the Mahanāyaka decision caused considerable annoyance and inconvenience to monks and laymen of the District and he reported, "I had considerable difficulty in persuading them to be patient".⁴⁰⁰ Ratanajothi lead *Sripada Palaka Sangha Sabhava* accused Dhammānanda of sabotaging the election meeting and appealed to the Colonial Secretary to remove his name from the voting list. In return Dhammānanda blamed Ratanajothi for breaching 'the joint committee convention of 1926'.⁴⁰¹ In the middle of this accusation the Mahanāyaka of Malvatta

³⁹⁶ SLNA 45/2966

³⁹⁷ AR 1935.

³⁹⁸ *ibid.*

³⁹⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ SLNA 45/2966

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*

wanted to appoint Dhammānanda as the acting chief Monk of Sri Pāda temple, which was later refused by C.H Collins, the GA Sabaragamuva.⁴⁰²

By the mid 1930's dispute between Dhammānanda and Ratanajothi had unstoppably escalated. Two separate lists of voters for the election of chief monk for Sri Pāda temple had been prepared by the camp of Ratanajothi and Dhammānanda. However, Ratanajothi's list was declared as the list of 'the improperly countersigned' and a resolution was passed at the Malvatta Sangha Council to counter it in the following terms:

In accordance with the Order of Sangha issued on the decision of our Kāraka Maha Sangha Sabha in connection with the registration of Bhikkus under the Section 41 of the New Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance, the Bhikkus hitherto registered as belonging to our Malvatta Vihāra section and permanently resident in the Ratnapura District and who had obtained the certification of the Chief High Priest of the Sabaragamuva Province or that of the Mahanayake Thero should be recognised as voters regarding the Nāyakahip of Sripadasthana or as our Bhikkus resident in Ratnapura District. Anyone who does not accept the Order of Sangha does not possess any claim, power, right or responsibility as one of our Bhikkus of Ratnapura District. Therefore the list of Bhikkus, who were registered as above, should be sent to the Chief High Priest of Sabaragamuva Province certified as the list of voters regarding the Nāyakahip of Sripadasthana.⁴⁰³

Under the authority of this resolution Dhammānanda prepared the list of voters, it was certified as the 'correct' list by the Mahanāyaka, and it was eventually published in the *Sinhala Bauddhaya* of 13th January 1934. Disregarding the Sangha Council resolution on 14th February 1934, under the presidency of Ratanajothi, there was a public meeting held at Palmadulla in which Ratanajothi was unanimously elected as the chief monk of Sri Pāda⁴⁰⁴.

⁴⁰² *ibid.*

⁴⁰³ NLR 1956:84

⁴⁰⁴ K.G Collection

According to the minutes of the Ratanajothi's meeting several monks belonging to other Nikāyas (the Asgiriya Chapter of the Siam Nikāya, the Amarapura and Ramanya Nikāyas) were present to witness the proceedings and over five hundred laymen also participating as lay witnesses of the Ratanajothi's selection, among them some well known lay leaders of the District namely Barns Ratwatte Dissawa, H.A.Gunasekera Ratemahatmaya, S.A.I Elapata Ratemahatmaya, W.T. Ellawala Ratemahatmaya and R.A. Dharmadasa, Chairman Urban Council of Ratnapura were highlighted in the minutes and also the Public Trustee of Ceylon (P.E. Pieris) was present at the meeting as an observer⁴⁰⁵. This meeting seemed to be well received by a larger section of the Ratnapura, the elites' participation was impressively high and this suggests that Ratanajothi's had been highly important and popular monk among the people in the Ratnapura area.

Just four days after the Palmadulla meeting Dhammānanda held a separate meeting at Kirielle where he was elected as the chief monk of Sri Pāda temple too. For that meeting the announcement was published in the *Dinamina* newspaper of 22nd January and 2nd February, and in the *Sinhala Baudhaya* of 3rd February by Dhammānanda to give legitimacy to his meeting⁴⁰⁶. To support Dhammānanda's meeting, Mahanāyaka made an announcement in which he ordered, "Only those whose names appeared in the list published on 13th January 1934 [*sinhala bauddhaya*] need attend the meeting at Kiriella".⁴⁰⁷ And he went on further, and participated at the meeting himself together with the few members of Malvatta Sangha Council. Later it was found that the Malvatta monks and J.G.B. Kiriella Ratemahatmaya in the area were presented at the meeting as witnesses to the Dhammananada's appointment.⁴⁰⁸ But the Public Trustee refrained from attending that meeting and in general the support of elites and official in Ratnapura seemed to be visibly lacking

⁴⁰⁵ KG Collection.

⁴⁰⁶ NLR 1956: 84

⁴⁰⁷ *ibid.*

⁴⁰⁸ KG Collection

On 20th February 1934 the selection of Morontuduve Dhammānanda was reported to the Public Trustee by the Mahanāyaka of Malvatta and the Public Trustee was asked to recognise the Dhammānanda as the successful candidate for the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple, '*Vihāradhipathi of Sripadathāna*'. Before this happened, Ratanajothi had already reported to the Public Trustee about his selection and asked that they recognise him as the Vihāradhipathi at Sri Pāda temple. But Mahanāyaka, Pahamune Sri Sumangala of Malvatta, opposed the Ratanajothi's selection and called it 'unauthorised' or 'an ecclesiastical offence' and advised the Public Trustee not to recognise him as the legally elected chief monk for Sri Pāda temple. In fact, Mahanāyaka went further and temporally banned the voting rights of monks who supported Ratanajothi. Ratanajothi was unhappy about the Mahanāyaka's decision and began to publicly accuse him. As a result, Ratanajothi was asked to appear before the Sangha Council at Malvatta to purge himself of the offence. Owing to his failure to attend the ecclesiastical court his name was removed from the monk register and he was expelled from the monkhood⁴⁰⁹. But it was not an easy task for the Mahanāyaka and he continually wrote to the Registrar General who firmly believed such expulsion was unlawful under the 1931 Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance.⁴¹⁰ In fact this issue was also brought to the attention of the State Council by a group of local elites through a petition signed by 171 distinguished persons in Ratnapura.⁴¹¹ I do not have direct information about what happened surrounding the expulsion of Ratanajothi from the monkhood. However, according to the Public Trustee's report, neither Ratanajothi nor Dhammānanda was appointed as chief priest of Sri Pāda temple. A similar report mentioned that Ratanajothi had nominated name after name for the Trusteeship of Sri Pāda temple. At the same time Dhammānanda sent names of his nominees against Ratanajothi's nominations. Both parties' nominations for the Trusteeship were turned down by the Public Trustee at various points on the basis of the prevailing ambiguity about their claim to the chief

⁴⁰⁹ His position as the deputy chief monk of Sabaragamuva was assigned to a leading monk of the Vehalle paramparava, Paragala Somananda (Ñānavimala 1976: 212).

⁴¹⁰ KG Collection.

⁴¹¹ *ibid.*

priestship. Instead, as I have already discussed, the Public Trustee decided, until the issue was legally settled, to appoint a provisional Trustee himself⁴¹².

However, immediately after the death of Ratanajothi in 1943, Dhammānanda again nominated a Trustee and this time even the Public Trustee refused his nomination. It is quite unclear to me why the Public Trustee did so. But the rejection of the Dhammānanda's nomination for the Trusteeship was brought into the court. After a long hearing of the case at the District Court in Colombo the judgement declared to grant the chief priestship of Sri Pāda temple to Dhammānanda in 1954 and order the Public Trustee to issue the letter of appointment to him⁴¹³. He was able to hold the Sri Pāda office until he died in 1970. Interestingly, one important decision came up in the judgement that hereafter 'those who higher ordinate (*upasampada*) under Malvatta chapter of Siam Nikāya and *permanently* resided in Ratnapura District are eligible to voting as well as appointing for Sri Pāda chief priestship' (special 318-246, Colombo High Court).⁴¹⁴ This decision came into operation after the death of Dhammānanda.

Appendix V. The Continuity of Disputes over 'postcolonial Sri Pāda'

By the mid 1950s under the chairmanship of Kirielle Ñanavimala an organization called "*sabaragamu bhikku sanvidanaya*" (lit. Organisation for Sabaragamuva monks, 'SBS') was formed⁴¹⁵. One of the main objectives of the organization was 'taking back the chief priestship of Sri Pāda temple to the hands of Ratnapura monks' and to overcome such objectives, the new constitution was drafted with a set regulations and unanimously accepted those regulations as the basis for the future selection of Sri Pāda chief priestship and the management of Sri Pāda temple

⁴¹² Administrative Report of the Public Trustee for 1933.

⁴¹³ The New Law Reports (NLR) Vol. Lviii, Government Press, 1956:78-92.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Ñanavimala was a well known scholarly monk and he wrote and edited several books on Buddhism, history of the Sabar agamuva and indigenous medicine and had several articles to his credit (Ñanavimala 2001: vi). Ñanavimala was born in a village called Kiriella in the Kuruvita Korale, went to Ratnapura in 1908 and became a novice at age of fourteen under the Marapana Medhankara and Srisumana. In 1928 he became higher ordinate monk at the Malvatta in Kandy and he studied at the Vidyodaya monastic collage in Colombo. After a considerable period of illness he died in 1984. (Ponnamperuma, A. 1994. *pujith charitha*-vol.5. *sanskruthika katayuthu departamentuva*).

affairs⁴¹⁶. There were six regulations. One such striking regulation was that ‘the life time’ chief priesthood should be limited to only five years periods and then an election should be held for the new appointment, under which the out-going chief priest can be re-elected⁴¹⁷. But some monks, including newly appointed chief priest Morontuduve Dhammānanda, who were not members of the SBS, were against these new regulations. However, the new constitution of SBS was sent to the Buddha Sāsana Commission, which was set up in 1957 to inquire into the state of Buddhism on the island and to make recommendations on how the state could best act to further Buddhist ideals. The Commission was also asked to inquire into the administration of Buddhist temples (*vihāra*) and deity shrines (*devāla*) and to recommend measures ensuring efficiency in such administration (Commission Report 1959: viii). But later it was found that the regulations set up for Sri Pāda temple affairs by the SBS had not been included into the Commission’s final recommendations. The SBS was not happy about the exclusion of their constitutional proposal on Sri Pāda temple affairs from the Commission’s recommendations and its chairman, Kirielle Ñanavimala began to publicly criticize the Commission’s report.⁴¹⁸ The SBS was also deeply concerned about ongoing activities at Sri Pāda temple and equally paid much attention to scrutinizing Dhammānanda’s ‘Sri Pāda temple development programme’ and started to publicly criticize the way in which Sri Pāda temple funds had been used for its construction and renovation works⁴¹⁹. One such criticism was made by the Secretary of SBS, Kotamulle Ratanajothi, in a brief article written for the 50th anniversary collection of the popular monastic school in Ratnapura. The title of the article was “Sripadastanaya”. In it he hailed the former lay Trustee, Ellawala, for spending Sri Pāda temple’s funds on the development of monastic education in the

⁴¹⁶ Kirielle Ñanavimala (no date) *Vihara Dewala ha Sri Pādasthanaya*. Colombo: Indika Press.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid. 7-8pp.

⁴¹⁸ Ñanavimala distributed a leaflet carrying the heading “*Buddha sasana commission sabha varta vivechanaya ha pratikshapaya*” in which he criticised and rejected the new policy of the Buddhist Commission. For another critique of these recommendations, see Havanpola Ratanasara, (1961) *Buddha sasana komisan sabha varta samalocanaya* (Colombo: Gunasena). I have no intention to discuss those recommendations here.

⁴¹⁹ ‘Sripadastanaya’ in *Sri Visudharama Rajatha Jayanthi Sangrahaya* ed. K. Ñanavimala and K. Ratanajothi (1964). Palamadulla: Saparagamu mudranalya

area but he criticised Dhammānanda for using most of Sri Pāda funds for profitable “contract work” (*‘kontrath vāda’*) instead of using those funds for the benefit of the monks in Ratnapura area. But Dhammānanda laid the foundation for the constructing Buddhized Sri Pāda temple, which was never accepted by his critiques like Ratanajothi.

Soon after the death of Dhammānanda in 1970, the SBS of secretary, Kotamulle Ratanajothi called a meeting to nominate a suitable candidate for Sri Pāda chief priestship. In that meeting the chairman of the SBS, Ñānavimala’s name was unanimously approved.⁴²⁰ Before that Ñānavimala had sent an application to the Malvatta Sangha Council for the post of chief monk for Sabaragamuva too. But he was not successful on that and his contender Haldanduvana Dhammarakkitha was appointed. As the chief priest of the province, Dhammarakkitha’s first task was to conduct an election for Sri Pāda temple chief priestship. The election was to be held on 24th September 1970. Before that an influential member of the SBS, Batugedara Yasassi was declared to contest against Ñānavimala. After this decision the SBS split up⁴²¹. There were other contenders but many of them withdrew their nomination before the election⁴²². Hence, the contestation was basically between Yasassi and Ñānavimala⁴²³. During the election campaign personal qualities and the behaviour of both monks were highly debated.⁴²⁴ Both parties had made promises, (which I found in their printed policy statement) to assure voters on personal and common benefits that they would receive from the Sri Pāda temple funds⁴²⁵.

⁴²⁰ Conversation with Rev. Kehelawitigama Seevali of Muvagama Sri Vissudharama Pirivena, Ratnapura, 20th, July 2002.

⁴²¹ Ibid. –But just after the completion of the Sri Pāda election in 1971, there was another organization namely “*Sabaragamu Maha Sangha Sabhava*” (Sabaragamu Monk Council) which had formed under the chairmanship of Yasassi. Unfortunately, I don’t have enough detail of it.

⁴²² Conversation with Vehalle Dhammapala, chief monk of Sabaragamuva, 19th, Oct.2001.

⁴²³ At the time of election both of contenders were holding a principle (parivenadhipathi) post in two popular monastic schools in Ratnapura where they were able to conduct the election campaign through the support of their pupils (ibid.).

⁴²⁴ There were several leaflets circulated on the personal life of Ñānavimala. I could observe a few of them but the contents of them are not in published condition.

⁴²⁵ For example Yasassi made twelve promises including; monetary help for the pupils of voters in monastery education and university education, to build a separate ward for monks at the Ratnapura

Just before the election Ñanavimala made an allegation against the chief monk of Sabaragamuva, Dhammarakkitha, that he had prepared a voting list in favour of Yasassi and he boycotted the election. But election went on as scheduled and Yasassi's name was declared⁴²⁶ as the new chief priest for Sri Pāda temple. But some of Ñanavimala's supporters later described it as "a terrible looting" of the monk's vote (*darunu mankolloyak*).⁴²⁷ Ñanavimala brought this case to the District court in Ratnapura in order to cancel the election result but his claim was rejected⁴²⁸. Soon after the District court decision, he made an appeal to push the case into the High Court in Colombo. In the High Court he made a new claim that the Yasassi's appointment be declared as illegal because he did not belong to the '*Vehälle Sangha paramparāva*' (Vehälle monk lineage), but the Court reaction to his claim is not clear.⁴²⁹ Yasassi's appointment was accepted by both Malvatta Sangha Council and the Public Trustee.⁴³⁰ It is important to note here that the Malvatta Sangha Council's involvement in the appointment process seemed quite minimal as compared with the earlier elections, but they still played a role in finalizing the voting list, which was initially prepared rather than updated by the chief monk of Sabaragamuva. And they also presided at the ceremonial presentation of the certificate of recognition (*aktha pattraya*) to the elected chief priest of Sri Pāda temple in Kandy. As soon as

general hospital, redistribution of the material offerings received at Sri Pāda temple, and a thousand rupees cash donation for a monk's funeral, to name but a few.

⁴²⁶ According to election report 156 ordinate monks of Malvatta chapter in the Ratnapura District were eligible to vote at the election but 131 of them were present and 84 of them voted for Yasassi by putting their signature on Yasassi's voting register (this has been the method of casting vote in Sri Pāda incumbency elections). Among the lay participants N.G. Samarasinghe G.A Ratnapura, Tikiri Bandara Weerasekara Basnayake Nilame of Uggal Alutnuwara Kataragama Dewale, Harrale Weragama former Basnayake Nilame of Saman Dewala, Upali Elapatha Basnayaka Nilame of Saman Dewale, Palmadulla Plimentarian Dharmadasa Wanniarachchi and chief town counsellor of Ratnapura Upali Rajapakshe attended meeting (Pattiyawela Mahinda: 1991: 63-66).

⁴²⁷ A leaflet published by Marabe Jenaratana on 1st, Oct.1970. The full heading of the leaflet was "*sripada chanda vimasima darunu mankolloyak*". Jenaratana shows in the leaflet all the anomalies occurring in that election. But some of the accusations were later found to be untrue.

⁴²⁸ Lankadeepa Friday 27th November 1970.

⁴²⁹ After the death of Ñanavimala the Court hearing was stopped. (Personal conversation with Vehalle Dhammapala, chief monk of Sabaragamuva, 19th, Oct.200).

⁴³⁰ Lankadeepa 30th November 1970.

Yasassi⁴³¹ became the chief priest of Sri Pāda temple, he appointed the top temple staff from his closest supporters in the election campaign. In fact, one of them became the chief priest at Sri Pāda temple after the death of Yasassi in 1986.

In 1986 Yasassi died at the age of 64. The appointment of his successor got underway. The monks belonging to Vehälle lineage were busy recapturing their power that they lost in the last election. They had already secured the important and effective position of the election process, the chief priestship of the province of Sabaragamuva. Under the authority of that post, the chief priest of the province has the responsibility of preparing new voting lists and conducting the election under his chairmanship. After the death of former chief monk of Sabaragamuva province; in 1981 the Malvatta Sangha Council appointed a well-known monk, Vehälle Dhammapala, as the new chief monk residing at a temple in Palmadulla. Dhammapala was born in a small village called 'Vehalla' in the Southern Province where the founding monk of Vehälle lineage or "*Vehälle sangha paramparāva*", Vehälle Dhammadinna (1679-1775) was born in 1679. In 1928 Dhammapala became a monk under the teachers Vehälle Gnananada, Pravahara Vajiranana and Haldanduwana Dhammarakitha who, as Dhammapala claims, had a direct genealogical link to the Vehälle Dhammadinna. Interestingly, as the authority assigned in him the selection of chief priestship for Sri Pāda temple, Dhammapala issued a controversial press notice in which he called upon nominations to Sri Pāda chief priestship 'only from the monk who belongs to Vehälle *paramparāva*'. But, obviously, monks belonging to other lineages (*paramparāva*) of the Malvatta chapter in the District such as Mulkirigala, Valalgoda, Veediyaigoda and Abhayaraja got together and protested against the Dhammapala's devastating decision⁴³². Meanwhile,

⁴³¹ Yasassi was born in Batugedara near Ratnapura in 1922 as the eighth member of a large family. His father, K.M.Kodituwakku, was the chief secretary of the District Court in Ratnapura. At the age of 12 he became a lower ordinate monk under the Urapola Ratanajothi and Dippitigala Pannananda. In 1947 he obtained the higher ordination at Malvatta temple in Kandy and in 1959 was appointed as the principle of Dharmasala monastic school in Ratnapura, which was founded by his teacher, Ratanajothi in 1904. (*Batugedara Yasassi charithaya* (eds.) M. Vajirabudhi and B. Dammananda, Colombo: Bauddha Katayutu Pilibanda Departumantuwa, 1986).

⁴³² According to a local census there are 195 temples and 600 monks belonging to the Malvatta chapter in the Ratnapura District (Mahinda, P. 1991:20).

a pupil of Yasassi, Kampane Gunaratana, wrote to Mahanāyaka and the Sangha Council at Malvatta and requested them to attend to the issue.⁴³³ Dhammapala made his mind up after the intervention of Mahanāyaka, and issued a fresh notice in which he opened up candidature for other monks of the Malvatta chapter in the District. He was also asked to prepare a fresh voting list under the guidance of Mahanāyaka and they identified 205 eligible voters for the forthcoming election and the finalised list was published in local newspapers.⁴³⁴

While the list of voters was being marked out, Dhammapala received seven names of possible contenders for the chief priestship and some of them were rejected because they were unable to meet with the requisite qualification made under the High Court judgment in 1954.⁴³⁵ Under that legal arrangement the eligible monk should reside permanently in the Ratnapura district and also should obtain higher ordination from the Malvatta chapter in Kandy. Some of the monks whose nominations were rejected argued that they had obtained higher ordination as the monks of Ratnapura District from the Malvatta but resided in outside the District. Hence it was not fair to reject their nominations from the election. In fact they had brought attention the situation of previous elections where monks like Hikkaduve Sumangala and Morontuduve Dhammānanda became Sri Pāda chief priests without having voting rights in the election⁴³⁶. However, their argument seems to be unheard and failed to make difference among monks in the region. The selection procedure seems to entirely based on the legal-rational arrangement made in 1954.

Let me go back to the 1986 election, which elected the present chief monk of Sri Pāda Temple. The many anomalies, disagreements and strategic misunderstandings aroused in this election procedure were resolved according the rules set out in the 1954 court decision. Finally, there were two rival contenders up for the post of chief priestship and one was Handapāngoda Wimala who had served as Sri Pāda temple

⁴³³ KG Collection.

⁴³⁴ For instance: *Dinamina* Sept. 24, 1986

⁴³⁵ Conversation with Wehalle Dhammapala, 19th, Oct. 2001

⁴³⁶ For example: Attaduwa Chandarasiri published an open letter by highlighting those issues on 5th March 1986. I thank Vehalle Dhammpala for providing me a copy of this letter.

Trustee, under Yasassi's administration⁴³⁷. The other was Kottamulle Ratanajothi, the former secretary of *Sabaragamu Bhikku Sanvidhanaya* (SBS), which was founded by Kirielle Ñanavimala. During his sixteen years of tenure as temple Trustee, Wimala had earned substantial 'social capital' within the District and in the country as well. It is clearly reflected in the several official titles he holds in the province. He first obtained the post of deputy chief priestship of Sabaragamuva (*upa pradhana sanghanayaka*) from the Malvatta Sangha Council and he also secured the post of 'director' or '*kuthriyadhikari*' of the well-known monastic school, *Sudharmasala* in Ratnapura where Yasassi himself held that position before he died. Wimala used the Sudharmasala as the main centre of his election campaign and also received considerable support from the monks who had supported him in the Yasassi's election in 1970. Apart from all sort of relations, connection and positions, which he had by the election, his wealth had played the crucial role for him in securing the chief priestship at Sri Pāda temple. Wimala is the chief priest in the one of the wealthiest temples in the country; Kiriella Nadun Vihāraya owns about 8,000 acres of temple land and other properties. Therefore, Wimala had a stronger financial background than his contender Kotamulle Ratanajothi. During the pre-election campaign Wimala gave large cash donations to the poor temples in the District, and in addition to that personal cash donations were given to the monks who had the voting power in the election⁴³⁸. As the temple Trustee, he was also privileged enough to spend some of Sri Pāda temple funds for the benefit of the monks in the District, for example, building a well-equipped separate ward for monks at the Ratnapura general hospital under Yasassi's instruction and giving material support for the poor temples of the Malvatta chapter in the District.

But Wimal's opponents, particularly the monks and laities who supported Ratanajothi, brought the negative aspects of his personal life into the 'public domain', as Yasassi had done against his opponent, Ñanavimala. They did this

⁴³⁷ I conducted a brief interview with him on 20th Aug. 2002-Wimala was born in 1929 and at age of seventeen he became a novice, in 1957 higher ordained at Malvatta. In 1967, he became the viharadhipathi of Kiriella Nadun Raja Maha Viharaya.

⁴³⁸ Interview with Kampane Gunaratana, the chief organiser of the Wimal's election campaign on 11th December 2001.

mainly through anonymous leaflets circulated among the monks and laities in the District.⁴³⁹ He was also publicly accused of misusing Sri Pāda temple funds.⁴⁴⁰ And his opponent, Ratanajothi, went further and raised an issue against Wimala about the misuse of his position as Sri Pāda temple Trustee to influence to the voters. He argued that his position should be invalid after the death of Yasassi. On this ground, he wrote to the chief priest of Sabaragamuva with copies to Mahanāyaka of Malvatta, Buddhist Affairs Commissioner and the GA Ratnapura, urging them to reject Wimala's nomination from the election.⁴⁴¹ His claim was turned down because in a legal sense Wimala had another year of time to finish his five years' tenure as the Trustee before asking for another renewal⁴⁴².

Unlike Wimala, Ratanajothi had earned popularity among the Sabaragamuva monks as the 'educated monk' and at the time of the election he was the principle of the popular monastic school, *Muwagama Visuddharama*, in Ratnapura and also held the office of the chief monk of disciplinary affairs (*adhikarana sangha nayaka*) of monks in the Sabaragamuva⁴⁴³. In the election campaign he was supported by most of the monks belonging to the Vehālle lineage, to which he himself belonged as well as some well-known lay leaders of the District⁴⁴⁴.

On 6th October 1986, under the chairmanship of Sabaragamuva chief monk, Vehālle Dhammapala, the 'Sri Pāda election' was held at the Palmadulla Central College⁴⁴⁵.

⁴³⁹ I have possessed few copies of those leaflets.

⁴⁴⁰ Some of the charges appeared in '*Atta*' newspaper on 06th April 1983.

⁴⁴¹ I found this latter from VD Collection.

⁴⁴² Under the 1931 Buddhist Temporalities Ordinance a temple Trustee is appointed for five year period and after that it can be renewable.

⁴⁴³ *Kotamulle Ratanajothi Nayaka Suwamindra Charitaya* (eds.) M. Pannasekara and B. Liyanage (1990).

⁴⁴⁴ Conversation with Kehelwitigama Seevali of Muvagama Sri Vissudharama Pirivena, Ratnapura, 20th, July 2002.

⁴⁴⁵ The proceeding of the election is as follow i) Welcome speech ii) Pirit chanting iii) Appointment a provisional secretary iv) Chairman speech v) Nomination vi) Calling for open voting vii) Declaration of result viii) Speech of the GA Ratnapura ix) Speech of elected monk x) Vote of thanks. Among the special invitees: Member of Parliament for Palmadulla, Basnayaka Nilame of Maha Saman devāle,

As expected, Handapāngoda Wimala won the election by 45 votes, as his opponent, Ratanajothi, received 75 votes. A monk who participated in this event designated the result of the election as ‘the defeat of learned (*ugathkama*) to the power of money (*salli balaya*)’.⁴⁴⁶ This conclusion might be a biased one but taking into consideration postcolonial election campaigns in Sri Lanka, this kind of assertion is hard to reject in the first instance. In the case of Sri Pāda, the monetary value of the individual vote was firstly recognized at Yasassi’s election (1970) but in the 1986 election the parties contesting had largely used this method to exploit the voting power for their own gain. As a well-known monk in the District stated to me “Sri Pāda is the only place where money is largely pouring (*salli vakkerana*) in the province of Sabaragamuva. Hence, spending money, in order to win the chief incumbency (*nayakakama*) is not unprofitable business (*avasi nati vedak*)”⁴⁴⁷.

Appendix VI

A group of Hindus operation under the Buddhicized Sri Pāda

The presence of Tamil Hindu estate workers as ‘worshippers’ to the sacred footprint is quite recent when compare to other ethno-religious groups in the country. I suspect it would be less than hundred years or so. Even so, until recently they could not establish a formidable direct relationship with the Sri Pāda temple. It is after the late 1960’s or early 1970’s that they began to maintain some form of ritual and non-ritual connections [as ‘the weight carriers’ (*bara karayo*)] with Sri Pāda Temple. Interestingly enough, their ritual and non-ritual connections with Sri Pāda Temple are worth exploring here because they are the only non-Buddhist group who have been able to operate under the highly Buddhicized postcolonial Sri Pāda. The temple authorities are well aware about the importance of the Tamil estate worker’s role in maintaining the Temple functioning. Because they supply chief labour for the temple

Superintendent of Police Rantapura, Commissioners’ and Regional Commissioner’s Buddhist Affairs, AGA Palmadulla and Principle of Gankanda Central Collage (I owe my gratitude to Rev. V. Dhammapala for providing me a copy of this document).

⁴⁴⁶ Conversation with Kehelowitzigama Seevali of Muvagama Sri Vissudharama Pirivena, Ratnapura, 20th, July 2002.

⁴⁴⁷ Conversation with Vehalle Dhammapala, 19th, Oct.2001

in order to carry all sort of goods and things that are needed for sustaining the day-to-day Temple affairs. This non-ritual connection is an economic one or a contractive one and far more visible than their ritual connection with the temple. In other words their ritual connection is far more limited with comparison to the volume of non-ritual services that they provide to the Temple as weight carriers (*bara karayo*). Before, I discuss these connections let me provide some general information about the Estate Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The Estate Tamils are an ethnic minority group comprising predominantly of plantation workers on tea and rubber estates in the Central highlands of Sri Lanka. The term 'Indian Tamils', is also used for Estate Tamils and refers to the descendants of recent immigrants from South India who share a common cultural heritage and association with the hill-country and estate life. Estate Tamils are distinguished from the indigenous Sri Lankan Tamils who mostly live in the Northern and Eastern provinces in the island. They live mainly in the Central highland and are separated by caste, culture, occupation, their relatively recent arrival in the island and political affiliations, from the indigenous Sri Lankan Tamils. Although they share the same language and Hindu religion, the Estate Tamils have neither identified their interests with those of the indigenous Sri Lankan Tamils nor supported their separatist claims for an independent state (cf. Hollup 1994: xvi; see Daniel 1989). The estate Tamil emerged as a relatively 'closed' community in the geographically and socially isolated territorial boundaries of the plantation regions.

Basically, Estate Tamils are worshippers of the God Siva's two sons, Ganesh (pillaiyar) and Murugan and the mother goddess Amman. However, they believe that the deities with different names are only manifestations of 'one' God but not in the sense that the Christian and Muslims find one monotheistic God in their religious traditions. They also believe that, each deity has a number of reincarnations (*avataram*), for instance Vishnu may emerge as Rama, Krishna etc. Similarly, the mother goddess also emerges as the Durga, Mariamman and the ferocious kali. It is not my aim here to discuss at length the kind of popular Hinduism found among the estate Tamils in the island; rather my concern here is to show what kind of ritual and

non-ritual relationships are being kept by the estate Tamils within the highly Buddhicized space of Sri Pāda Temple.

Hence, let me first explain their ritual connection with the Sri Pāda Temple. Interestingly, during the entire Tamil month of Marghali (mid Dec.-mid Jan) there is an important ritual event held among the estate Tamils in their respective temples (kovil) areas. That ritual is popularly known as '*bajanai*' (lit. chanting hymn of praise to God), performed for the honour of the God Vishnu or his seventh avatar God Rama. The God Rama is believed to be represented in a beautifully decorated hand held spherical symbol with a stand artistically made in brass, known as the *kumbam* (lit. wooden stick). In the centre of the *kumbam* or the sphere the God Rama is represented through his weapon and symbol, namely a club (*namam* or *sula yudam*), a conch shell and a discus (*chakra*). The ritual *bajanai* is centrally performed around this moveable symbolic structure or *kumbam* of the God Rama.

During this month, which is considered to be an inauspicious period, they seek protection from the God through performing *bajanai* in the each morning and the evenings to avoid becoming a victim of disease or being struck by any other misfortune. On this occasion a group of young males and children walk in a procession and visit the line-rooms of workers and estate staff quarters singing religious hymns and devotional songs for Rama to the accompaniment of music, while carrying beautifully decorated *kumbam* with great respect. As the procession arrives at the door steps of workers (without a gender difference), they used to perform several ritual activities to the *kumbam* or symbolically to the God Rama such as offering camphor flame, adding oil to the lamp, offering coin (*panduru*) and washing the bottom of the *kumbam* with pure water which is symbolically marked for the washing of the feet of the God Rama. In return, each worshipper-receives a dot of holy ash on their foreheads as they get a blessing from the God Rama. The *bajanai* group turn out every morning and every evening from the estate temple, where they usually sleep during the whole month. However, some area *bajanai* do not perform daily as Hollup reports in Nuwara Eliya area, *bajanai* is usually performed two or three times a week (1994:286). The *bajanai* group is mainly consisted of young, unmarried males and there is a group leader or organizer who

always carries the *kumbam* to each and every line-room of the estate workers and return to the kovil again before going to work in the fields.

Interestingly, before concluding the *bajanai* ritual in each season, the estate temples, which are situated around Sri Pāda Temple carry out a special ritual practice at Sri Pāda Temple. The several groups of *bajanai* who belong to those estate temples carry the *kumbam* to Sri Pāda Temple to get blessing from the sacred footprint, which they believe to be the footprint of the God Vishnu⁴⁴⁸. Taking *kumbam* to Sri Pāda Temple is no doubt a recent innovation. They carry the *kumbam* together with fellow estate workers, both men and women and their children. As soon as they arrive at Sri Pāda Temple, they wash their faces and feet with the holy water that is the mixture of milk and sandalwood before entering the upper courtyard of the Temple. Firstly, they circumambulate the central shrine of the sacred footprint, while they sing devotional songs for the God Rama to the accompaniment of music. Secondly, they sit in front of the sacred footprint shrine and continue the music and devotional songs for ten or fifteen minutes, during which no offering is made to the sacred footprint but it is worshipped at the end of each song. Finally, the leader of *bajanai* group carries the *kumbam* to in front of the deity shrine of the Saman and offers their tribute to the God without entering into the shrine, which is marked the end of the brief ritual engagement of the estate Tamils at Sri Pāda Temple. There were about eight *bajanai* performances taking place at Sri Pāda Temple during my fieldwork and there was no notable variation between each performance that I have witnessed at the Temple. It is important to note here that I can only provide a brief account on this important ritual because providing a fuller account of the ritual is beyond the scope of my overall research project. The *bajanai* is the only ritual that is noticeably performed by a non-Buddhist group at today's Sri Pāda Temple. But it has not been widely a popular practice among the majority of Tamil Hindus who live in the up country plantation area. Hence, the performing of *bajanai* at the Sri Pāda Temple by a specific group of estate Tamils has a political significance rather than ritual or religious significance.

⁴⁴⁸ But some estate Tamils believe, it is the footprint of God Siva.

How do they find a ritual space in a highly Buddhicized religious space? As I mentioned earlier, the role of estate Tamils workers are very crucial for-maintaining Sri Pāda Temple functionaries. Without their help, I would argue the function of the Temple would not be an easy exercise. They are the main weight carriers of the all the essential food items, temple offerings, cash, material and things; required for the proper running of the Temple affairs. They have under taken such a difficult task since the Sinhala weight carriers (*bara karoyo*) in the neighbouring villages demanded a higher rate of payment for their duties in the early seventies. Since, then the estate Tamils have been operating as the weight carriers for the temple under fairly low wages⁴⁴⁹ but the amount that they receive from the Temple authorities is higher than what they receive from the plantation companies. Today they hold the monopoly as the weight carriers to Sri Pāda Temple whereas Sinhala labourers who had held this monopoly had lost prominence under the contestation of Tamil estate workers. However, with the course of time the Tamil state workers were strong enough to bargain higher rates for their services, and on a few occasions the Temple authorities responded to them positively. But this was not always the case, most of the time they had to win their demand after carrying regular strikes against the Temple authorities.

It is after the establishment of such bargaining power with the Temple authorities, that the *bajanai* ritual began to visibly appear in the Buddhicized Sri Pāda ritual space. This is not to say that the religious connection of the estate Tamil began to establish with the Temple through the *bajanai* ritual but prior to that they have been continually visits to the sacred site as Tamil Hindu pilgrims who believe the scared footprint at the Temple their god. Their presence at Sri Pāda as worshippers is quite visible in the first two weeks of January when most of them come with *bajanai* but the highest attendance is noticeably viewed towards end of the pilgrimage period in May. Though their historical presence at Sri Pāda as worshippers might not exceed overall numbers of Hindu pilgrims in the late nineteenth century, they began to

According to a Tamil weight carrier they received Rs.75 .in mid 1990s per each journey then it gradually increased after they bargained with temple authorities from 85 to Rs. 100 and in 2003 they receive Rs. 200 for carrying 50 k.g to the temple.

present at the highly Buddhiscized Sri Pāda with some form of religious symbol and performance (*bajanai*) right after they firmly held the monopoly of providing the most 'difficult service' to the Temple. The presence of estate Tamil Hindu community at the Sri Pāda Temple both in religious and economic domains could implicitly be seen as the some form of non-Buddhist contestation for establishing a 'new' form of "Tamil Hindu identity" at Sri Pāda. Despite this new development, Sri Pāda has become an increasingly majoritarian Buddhist space by excluding other religious practices that had operated alongside Buddhist practices for many centuries at the pilgrimage centre.

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